

## INFALLIBILITY.

This is a question of such vital importance that to properly deal with it a volume would be necessary. About a year ago we wrote an editorial upon the subject of Infallibility, in which we strove to present, in a couple of columns, the whole series of arguments in support of the dogma. Of course our statement was necessarily very general and very incomplete. Since then, from different sources, we received letters asking explanations, in detail, of the points advanced. Were we to attempt replying to the countless questions that have poured in upon us during the past three years, we would require to either engage a half-dozen of secretaries and a special theologian, or else to give up entirely the writing of THE TRUE WITNESS editorials. There is a limit to every capacity, no matter how elastic it may be. But, on the question of "Infallibility," we have determined to combine the two tasks, and reply to those who have deemed us worthy of their inquiring letters, by giving our answers in editorial form. This will necessitate a number of short articles on the subject. In order to assist persons who are anxious to go deeper into the arguments, we will state that we purpose following the plan of Rev. Daniel Lyons' admirable work, "Christianity and Infallibility—Both or Neither;" and while not confining ourselves to that masterly exposition, still we will quote at times from its pages—according as the case may demand. What has principally stimulated us to undertake these articles is the fact that not a few of our correspondents are Protestants and of them two are clergymen.

That we may be the better understood, and more easily followed, we will now state what we purpose answering: Firstly, we will deal with "What Infallibility is not;" secondly, with "What Infallibility really is;" thirdly, with "The Origin of Infallibility;" fourthly, with "The Object of Infallibility;" fifthly, "In what capacity is the Pope infallible;" sixthly, "In what matters;" and seventhly, "Under what conditions." Although the scope of the work above referred to far exceeds these limits, still, in consideration of our being obliged to examine and quote from numerous other volumes on the subject, we do not wish to go beyond the seven headings thus drawn up. In this issue we will content ourselves with pointing out "What Infallibility is Not."

Either there is an Infallible Witness, Guardian and Interpreter of Christianity, as given by Christ to the Apostles, and, through them, to the world, or else there is no such Infallible representative of Divine authority. By all it is conceded that the greater part of the teachings of Christianity outstrip the powers of human reason, and are consequently of a domain unexplored and unexplorable, as far as the human and finite mind is concerned. Did Christ appoint and give powers to an Infallible Witness, Guardian and Interpreter of those truths, or did He not? If He did, there is an end to all controversy; all private interpretation that does not fully accord with that infallible interpretation is absolutely false. If He did not, there is no certainty in Christianity, and all the creeds and fragments of creeds that have arisen, that exist and that may yet arise, are but so many Babel tongues clamoring in discord, becoming more and more confused as the ages pass, and destined to end in ignorance of truth and in a chaotic mass of errors. So if there is no Infallible guide, there is no certainty, no fulcrum, no lever, in a word, no Christianity.

Before stating what Infallibility really

is, we wish to point out what it is not. E. A. Proctor, in his ninth volume on "Knowledge," says that the doctrine, "as commonly understood, is, of course, preposterous on the face of it. But the common mistakes about the doctrine are themselves preposterous." Exactly! It is the "mistakes" regarding Infallibility that render the doctrine apparently "preposterous" to all who do not understand it. Here are a few of those "preposterous mistakes." Dr. Draper, in his "History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science," says "Infallibility means Omniscience." Prof. Schulte says it is "Omnipotence." Prof. Geffken calls it the Pope arrogating to himself "a divine nature." In "Eirenicon," Dr. Pusey says, "an accurate writer, recently returned from Rome, had the impression that some of the 'extreme' Ultramontanes, if they do not say so in so many words, imply a quasi-hypostatic union of the Holy Ghost with each successive Pope." In Macmillan's Magazine, December, 1874, a writer says that the Pope claims to be "the Incarnation and Visible Word of God." Cardinal Newman, in his "Apologia," quotes Kingsley as saying, "Infallibility means that the Pope of Rome had the power of creating right and wrong; that not only truth and falsehood, but morality and immorality depended upon his setting his seal to a bit of parchment." Again, Dr. Draper says "infallibility enables the Pope to accomplish all things by miracle, if need be." Janus in "The Pope and the Council" says that Infallibility means Inspiration. Dr. Littledale tells us that by reason of Infallibility "all the decisions of the Pope on faith and morals are divinely inspired; being so, they become so much more Holy Scripture." He adds that it enables the Pope to "at any time modify or alter the old belief, just as a Parliament of Queen Victoria may repeal any statute of a former reign." Cardinal Hergenrother, in "The Catholic Church and Christian State," quotes Prof. Schulte as saying that by virtue of Infallibility "the Pope might in one day abolish all the established dogmas of the Church." On the seventeenth page of his "Vatican Decrees" Gladstone holds that its "reach" is absolutely "as wide as it may please the Pope, or those who may prompt the Pope, to make it."

Here are a few of the many "preposterous mistakes" that non-Catholics make, and in consequence of which they conclude that the dogma itself is irrational. It is not the dogma, but the false ideas of it that are at fault. In our next issue we will concisely tell what Infallibility really is; suffice for the present to say that it is not what the above writers imagine it to be. In his work, "Is Life Worth Living?" Mr. W. H. Mallock says: "To sum up: if we would obtain a true view of the general character of Catholicism we must begin by making a clean sweep of all the views that, as outsiders, we have been taught to entertain about her. Let honest inquirers do this to the best of their power, and their views will undergo an unlooked for change."

Until our non-Catholic friends lay aside all their preconceived and fanciful notions regarding Catholic doctrine, and are prepared to come down, with unbiased minds, to a logical study of the Church's teachings, they are totally unfit to grasp the first link in that unbroken chain of reasoning which extends from the throne of Leo XIII. back to the scene of the Last Supper. Each dogma of the Church is a link therein, and they are all so joined that no one can be ignorant without a breaking of the whole system.

## LIGHT LITERATURE.

Did any of our readers ever reflect on the fact that the reading of light literature is a disease—that the literature itself is a drug, an opiate? Yet such is the case. Hence the care that should be exercised in placing books in the hands of young people. To some—the thoughtless—our convent-teachers are considered too severe, too old-fashioned, too scrupulous, when they refuse to allow young girls to read even very praise-worthy stories. To our mind these teachers cannot be too cautious. Experience has taught the evident working of that appetite once it is aroused into activity. Let us take an example.

Here is a young girl in school who is allowed—for the sake of improving or style of composition, or for any other reason—to read, during portion of the day certain very innocent and very well written stories. There is no harm in that, provided the desired result, and none other, were to follow. But a story is ever more interesting than a text book of history, geography or mathematics. The hour when she may return to her story is longed for, and gradually an indifference, if not a distaste, for the other and more important studies is created. In the inverse ratio of that distaste augments the appetite for reading. Soon these innocent stories lose their charm, something more sensational is required to satisfy the craving. Books are smuggled in, hidden away, and pored over in hours snatched by stealth from duty. Vacation comes, and the girl's first anxiety is to secure novels of a more or less dangerous class. Whether the parents are vigilant or not the books can be procured and read. If the pupil is a day-scholar, so much the worse; the hours, at home, that should be given to study and preparation for class are spent in the wild regions of romance.

Stronger and stronger grows the desire, the yearning for sensational, unreal, mental food. It is exactly like the opium habit. Part of a grain; then a grain; then two, three, four grains; finally long intervals of stupor, wild visions, fantastic scenes; and the accompanying weaknesses of system, failing of physical energy, breaking up of the constitution—at last a poor shattered human wreck.

Go into the world of young ladies to-day and what do you find? The educated girl, the one who has left school and is at home quietly awaiting the chance of a draw in life's lottery to come, spending her days and nights in the realms of romance. She is the one who prides in being called the "book-worm" of the house. There is not a standard novel she has not read; nor is there a sensational, blood and thunder, divorce and suicide sheet she has not perused. She "whiles away her time," she lets the hours of life go past while lulled into semi-unconsciousness of the realities around her and stifled with the opiate of bad, or, at least, noxious literature. Long into the night she sits up gloating over the fascinating pages; wearing out her eyes, her strength, her mind. She lives neither for this world nor for the next. As far as this world is concerned, she has no thought of its stern reality, of its miseries, its trials, its obligations, its duties; and as to the next world she is entirely oblivious of its claims upon the time and conduct of the one who has a soul to save. She is equally unprepared for both. She is a physical and mental wreck. To all appearance her frame is strong and perhaps beautiful, her mind is bright and captivating; but let either summons come, and she is totally unprepared to answer.

If a good man turns up who is ready

to give her a home she is as unfit to marry him as would be an Eastern Odalisque. She knows nothing of real life; she wants a hero, a Monte Cristo, or some such fantastic creature for a husband. The man, who has been seeking a wife, a helpmate, a companion, finds that he has a dreaming-doll, a fragment of humanity that must be pampered and tended like a hot-house exotic. He is not her ideal; he is a vulgar, money-making person. She wants a prince, or some character famed in the annals of adventure—a clever detective, or even a good Paul Clifford might be her fancy. In a word, she is unprepared for the duties of her station in life. And if that other summons should come, and the voice of the Great Master should call her away to a scene still more real, she is totally unfit to appear before Him. If for every "idle word" an account must be rendered, what a fearful reckoning for hundreds of idle hours! When the poor, frail, timid soul stands alone before the Infinite—in the inexpressible silence and awfulness of the Eternal surroundings—what avail all the days, the nights, the years spent in the company of lovers, false wives, betraying husbands, misers, spendthrifts, murderers, robbers, divorced men and women? What use all those fairy castles and baseless visions of unattainable and ever sinful enjoyments?

It is a crying sin to train a child in the ways of immorality; it is a deadly crime to help the creation of a thirst for liquor in the young; it is an actual murder to assist in forming a craving for opiates in the human being. Is it less a wrong to so instruct, so educate, so cultivate the mind and heart of a young person that the result above mentioned is inevitable? We do not think that these teachers can ever be too careful in regard to the material given the pupils to read. The young girl will have ample time and more than ample opportunity in after years to drink in the delicious—too often poisonous—draughts of light literature; the school days are already too few to be squandered in more or less useless reading.

## AN UNCALLED-FOR ATTACK.

At a recent political meeting in Sohmer Park, Mr. Devlin, M.P., of Ottawa County, made a very unjustifiable attack upon Hon. J. J. Curran, Solicitor-General. The general verdict is that such tactics, used by one Irish-Catholic towards another, are deserving of condemnation.

"Good goods are done up in small parcels." We have just received a neat little volume entitled "The Christian Woman in Philanthropy"; a study of the past and present, by Helena T. Goessmann. There are sixty-two pages in the book and it is sold at twenty-five cents per single copy. The address is P.O. Box 577, Amherst, Mass. This is apparently the first number of a series. For reading circles, literary clubs, sodalities, or organizations of women active in self-improvement, this booklet is of the greatest interest. It would be difficult to give a full appreciation of it in an editorial note; suffice to say that based upon the life and glorious example of Queen Elizabeth of Hungary, a number of most instructive and healthy lessons are given to the Christian woman of our day. Although the title would suggest a non-Catholic work, still this is deeply and solidly Catholic in every acceptance of the term. We were delighted with the apt historical examples and the ease with which the reader is carried from the past to the present. We will anxiously await the promised numbers that are to follow.