

THE PREDICTED FATE OF THE EARTH.

The Apostle Peter, in his second epistle, announced the approach of the time when "the heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." What has modern science to say to the possibility of a catastrophe such as that shadowed forth in a comparatively unscientific age, eighteen centuries ago? Mr. R. A. Proctor, writing in his latest volume, "The Flowers of the Sky," remarks: "It is no longer a mere fancy that each star is a sun—science has made this an assured fact, which no astronomer thinks of doubting. We know that in certain general respects each star resembles our sun. Each is glowing like our sun with an intense heat. We know that in each star processes resembling in violence those taking place in our own sun must be continually in progress, and that such processes must be accompanied by a noise and tumult, compared with which all the forms of uproar known upon our earth are as absolute silence. The crash of the thunderbolt, the bellowing of the volcano, the awful groaning of the earthquake, the roar of the hurricane, the reverberating peals of loudest thunder, any of these, and all combined, are as nothing compared with the tumult raging over every square mile, every square yard, of the surface of each one among the stars."

He proceeds to describe, with considerable circumstantiality, two appearances witnessed in the heavens within the last few years—in 1866, when the tenth magnitude star (that is, four magnitudes below the lowest limit of the naked eye vision) in the constellation of the Northern Crown suddenly shone as a second magnitude star, afterwards rapidly diminishing in lustre, and in 1876 when a new star became visible in constellation Cygnus, subsequently fading again so as to be only perceptible by means of a telescope.

After noting the conclusions deduced from the application of the most approved instruments to these observations, Mr. Proctor remarks: "A change in our own sun, such as affected the star in Cygnus, or that other star in the Northern Crown, would unquestionably destroy every living creature on the face of this earth; nor could any even escape which may exist on the other planets of the solar system. The star in the Northern Crown shone out with more than eight hundred times its former lustre; the star in Cygnus with from five hundred to many thousand times its former lustre, according as we take the highest possible estimate of its brightness before the catastrophe, or consider that it may have been very much less. Now if our sun were to increase tenfold in brightness, all the highest forms of animal life, and nearly all vegetable life, would inevitably be destroyed on this earth. A few stubborn animalcules might survive, and possibly, a few of the lowest forms of vegetation, but naught else. If the sun increased a hundred fold in lustre, this heat would doubtless sterilize the whole earth. The same would happen in other planets.—*Sunday Magazine.*

A LASH WITH A SNAPPER.

Three saloon-keepers in Chicago were found guilty of selling liquor to minors, and the following is the address of the Judge who sentenced them, as reported in the Chicago "Tribune":

"By the law you may sell to men and women, if they will buy. You have given your bond and paid your license to sell to them, and no one has a right to molest you in your legal business. No matter what the consequences may be, no matter what poverty and destitution are produced by your selling according to law, you have paid your money for this privilege, and you are licensed to pursue your calling. No matter what families are distracted and rendered miserable, no matter what wives are treated with violence, what children starve or mourn over the degradation of a parent, your business is legalized, and no one may interfere with you in it. No matter what mother may agonize over the loss of a son, or sister blush for the shame of a brother, you have a right to disregard them all and pursue your legal calling; you are licensed. You may fit up your lawful place of business in the

most enticing and captivating form; you may furnish it with the most costly and elegant equipments for your lawful trade; you may fill it with the allurements to amusement; you may use all your arts to induce visitors; you may skilfully arrange and expose to view your choicest wines and captivating beverages; you may then induce thirst by all contrivances to produce a raging appetite for drink, and then you may supply that appetite to the full, because it is lawful; you have paid for it; you have a license.

"You may allow boys, almost children, to frequent your saloon; they may witness the apparent satisfaction with which their seniors quaff the sparkling glass; you may be schooling and training them for the period of twenty-one, when they, too, can participate, for all this is lawful. You may hold the cup to their very lips, but you must not let them drink—that is unlawful. But while you have all these privileges for the money you pay, this poor privilege of selling to children is denied you. Here parents have the right to say, 'Leave my son to me until the law gives you the right to destroy him. Do not anticipate that terrible moment when I can assert for him no further right of protection; that will be soon enough for me, for his mother, for his sister, for his friends, and for the community to see him take his road to death. Give him to us in his childhood, at least. Let us have a few years of his youth, in which we may enjoy his innocence to repay us in some small degree for the care and love we have lavished upon him.' This is something you, who now stand a prisoner at the bar, have not paid for; this is not embraced in your license.

"For this offence the Court sentences you to ten days' imprisonment in the county gaol, and that you pay a fine of seventy-five dollars and costs; and that you stand committed until the fine and costs of this prosecution are paid."

RENAN'S IDEAL OF GOD.

I come now to urge briefly the *third* charge against Renan's "Life of Jesus," that it is false to every just conception of God. While a Christian is saddened at seeing the bright and transcendent image of Christ darkened in the way described, he is led to trace this disastrous shade up to a radical injustice on the part of Renan to the character of God. In this system of mystical and sentimental unbelief, as among the orthodox, the Father and the Son are found to be one. The foundation of all Renan's errors as to Jesus, is a doctrine of God which can hardly be credited but for undoubted evidence, and the appearance of which in a work of European importance, excites irresistible compassion for the present state of European literature. It has often been argued by Christian advocates, that since Christianity has done infinitely more than any other religion to spread the just knowledge of God and of His attributes and moral laws, to ascribe its origin to error or imposture is to represent God as indebted for the best and fullest manifestation of Himself to the sin and weakness of His creatures. To the amazement of every theist of the older school, as well as of every Christian, Renan accepts this *reductio ad absurdum* as a profound principle of the divine policy in the government of the world. In treating of accommodation to popular illusions and errors, this novel style of moral theology is adopted: "All great things are done by the people, and the people are not led save by adopting their ideas. The philosopher who, knowing this, isolates and secludes himself in his nobility, is highly to be praised. But he who takes humanity with its illusions, and seeks to act on and by it, is not to be blamed. Cæsar knew very well that he was not the son of Venus; France would not be what she is, if men had not believed for a thousand years in the holy vial of Rheims. It is easy for us, weak creatures that we are, to call this lying, and, proud of our timid honesty, to treat with disdain the heroes who have accepted the struggle of life under other conditions. When we have done as much with our scruples as they with their lies, we shall have acquired the right to treat them with severity." A doctrine so startling needs to be confirmed by another citation. "Every idea, in order to succeed, has need to make sacrifices; we never come

forth immaculate from the struggle of life. To conceive the good, in short, is not sufficient; we must make it succeed among men. For this, ways less pure are necessary. Certainly were the Gospel limited to a few chapters of Matthew and of Luke, it would be more perfect, and would not now give a handle to so many objections; but without miracles would it have converted the world? If Jesus had died at the point we have just reached in His career, there would not have been in His life one and another page which wounds our moral sense (*qui nous blesse*), but, while greater in the eyes of God, He would have remained unknown to men; He would have been lost in the crowd of great souls unrecognized, the best of all; the truth would not have been promulgated, and the world would not have profited by the immense moral superiority bestowed on Him by His Father." This strikes fatally, not only at the character of Jesus, but at the character of God. It is true that Renan on this point, as on so many others, contradicts himself, maintaining elsewhere "that it has never been given to aberration of mind to have any serious effect on the march of humanity." But he is not less responsible for the deliberate opinion that the divine plan of the world demands pious fraud, as well as illusion, for the success of great enterprises, and that the success absolves the hero from blame. There is no protection of the divine character in the saving clause, that those who abstain from such arts are greater in the eyes of God than those who employ them; for God still prefers to work out the highest destinies of the world by fraud and imposture; and exalts to a divine motto the human confession, "*Vide meliora proboque; deteriora sequor.*" The degradation of the Divinity involved in such a theory of the moral universe is completed by the fact that Renan allows no redress in a future life of these moral inequalities; for there is for him no judgment to come, and no realization of the pure ideal of truth and right; and though in one mystical passage he speaks of "a final reparation which, in some unknown form, shall satisfy the wants of the human heart," and even speculates on the possibility of a dream of millions of years no longer than one hour, in which the absolute conscience of the universe shall recall in phantom-like array the actors of the moral scene, and "give to virtuous and moral humanity its revenge," this dream-like vision cannot retrieve the divine character; for all is divorced from personal immortality, and the ideal figure of Jesus which is then brought in to judge the world is itself an impure reality which needs to be judged. Evil, unredressed and unpunished, is thus the necessary vehicle of good, and a false Messiah is proclaimed by history the elect of God in whom His soul delighteth. The casting out of Satan by Satan becomes the divine programme of the universe. Where is now the defence of the innocent against the Jesuit in the cloister or the Jesuit on the throne; for the highest Throne of all is in fellowship with iniquity! Alas for the peoples of Europe amongst whom such a theology can arise, or who can welcome it as their deepest homage to the divine! This is all that is left for Renan as the exponent of the last phase of naturalism. This is the God on whose breast Jesus reposes; and when He leaps the gulf impassable to ordinary men between the human and the divine, this confused conscience of the universe, not yet become absolute and undistinguishable from atheism, is all that he holds in his embrace. The moral Deity of Kant, seated firmly amidst the ruins of schools and temples, on the stern summit of the law of duty, is out of date. The God, even of Voltaire, who, if he existed not, would need to be invented, is no longer a desideratum. A God who must work no real miracles, but who cannot dispense with sham ones, is the latest product of religious philosophy. It has designed a temple, but only achieved a cenotaph; and the whitened sepulchre, garnished with paint and strewn with *immortelles*, which, amidst the applause of millions, it has erected, is the common tomb of natural religion and of Christianity!—*Principal Cairns.*

It is announced that the health of Mr. Thomas Carlyle is rapidly declining. At his advanced age it cannot be expected that he will much longer survive, or that he can retain his former vigour.