



## PURGATORY.

What an infinite blessing is purgatory! What a terrible mistake did our Protestant friends make when they discarded purgatory and left it out of their formularies of belief? How can they console themselves in the death of relatives who, they are conscious, have gone into eternity with many imperfections and venial sins? We are told in Holy Writ that nothing defiled can enter heaven. They can not believe that their friends deserved to go to hell, nor that they were so free from imperfection as to deserve to go straight to heaven. They may be forgiven their moral sins through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, but something is due to the justice of God after sins have been forgiven. David, who was a man after God's own heart, was forgiven the great sin of which he had been guilty with the wife of Uriah; nevertheless, he had to satisfy the justice of God, which exacted the death of his favorite son, whom he loved as his own soul.

Heaven is the beatific vision of God, where angels and saints and glorified spirits dwell, and it stands to reason that no soul shall ever be permitted to enter there until it has paid the last farthing of penalty to the justice of God and has been cleansed and purified from every stain of impurity and defilement. Blessed be God for the consolation which Catholics enjoy in being able to pray for their departed friends, with the full confidence that their prayers and charitable sacrifices will be made available for their purification and final happy entrance into the world of light and bliss above.

This is no new doctrine. It is founded in reason, and is as old as Christianity. It was believed even under the Old Law before Christ came, as is testified by that striking passage of Machabees, so often quoted, in which the valiant Judas sent twelve thousand talents of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifices to be offered for the sins of the dead soldiers who had been guilty of purloining the votive offerings which hung in the temples of the idols of those whom they had conquered. "For," the account concludes, "it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."

That prayers for the dead were practiced by the early Christians is proved conclusively from the testimony of St. Augustine in the fourth century, who expressly declares: "Let heretics object as they may, nevertheless, it was a very ancient practice of the Church to pray and offer up the Holy Sacrifice for the dead." A very ancient practice, observe! And this great Father tells, himself, that his mother, Monica, enjoined it upon him that he should remember her after death in the Holy Sacrifice. St. Gregory Nazianzen says: "The practice of praying for the dead has been handed down to us from the very disciples of Jesus."

Catholics have no doubts in regard to a doctrine so old, so reasonable and so consoling, yet it may be a question whether they always appreciate it as they should. There are two ways in which they

may fail to derive all the benefits from it that it is calculated to bestow. In the first place, there is danger that they may underrate the evil of venial sin and go on indulging in it, under the impression that they can escape hell by purging away their venial sins in purgatory. Of course, a man who is conscientiously struggling against deliberate, habitual, venial sins may well console himself with the reflection that by passing through the fire of purgatory he may escape the fire of hell. But that is a very different thing from making purgatory an excuse for continuing in sin. Such a one has reason to fear that he may be compelled to go farther and fare worse.

In the second place, it is feared that none of us realize the severity of the punishment of purgatory. Of course, it would be an infinite gain for any soul to suffer the most excruciating torments for a thousand years, if by so doing an eternity of suffering could be avoided. But, surely, every reasonable man should esteem it an object worthy his most strenuous exertions and most generous sacrifices to obtain the shortest period possible in purgatory.

No doubt many will remember the very remarkable incident published in the *Ave Maria*, a few years ago, of the appearance of a dead nun to some of her former companions in her convent, when, to show them what she was suffering, she placed her hand on a door of one of the rooms and left there a charred impression of her hand burned into the door. Father O'Neil, C.S.C., was allowed to see this door and to take a photograph of it, and the impression was reproduced in the columns of the *Ave Maria*. Father O'Neil was fully convinced of the truth of the incident, and there is every reason to believe that the nun had actually been allowed by Almighty God to appear and give this evidence not only of the truth of the doctrine of purgatory, but also of the nature and severity of the ordeal through which even pious religious may be compelled to pass, even for what seems to us as small venial sins, for this nun acknowledged that she was suffering for some comparatively slight neglects of her Rule.

What are the practical lessons we are to learn on this subject? First, let us never cease to pray earnestly and offer the Holy Sacrifice as often as possible for the repose of the souls of our departed friends, even though they may have died with the reputation of sanctity. Second, let us be careful to lay a good foundation for ourselves, for the time to come, by carefully avoiding deliberate, even venial sins, thus striving to make our purgation as light as possible, remembering, always, that the more prayers will we secure for ourselves in the day of need, and the more quickly will we pass to our glorious reward in heaven. —*Sacred Heart Review*.

### AN AERIAL DOMICILE.

(Written for the Review by an English Banker.)

In former times, when imagination and superstition occupied the

position which science now holds, the four elements—as then understood—fire, water, earth and air, were believed to be the homes of innumerable hosts of various ethereal little beings. Fire had for its genie the imaginary salamander; water its graceful nymphs and naiads, ever youthful, and ever beautiful; earth its gnomes and pixies, ugly little misshapen creatures dwelling in the darkest recesses of caverns and mines; while air was peopled with throngs of fairies, elves, fays, sprites, and other diaphanous beings, mostly charming and extraordinarily lovely little existences, whose chief pleasure was supposed to be dancing by moonlight, or assisting in some way or other some human being with whom they had become enamoured; but occasionally spiteful, mischievous, and malevolent.

With the advance in knowledge, however, and the resulting disappearance of superstition (at any rate in reference to this particular subject), the belief in these fanciful creatures has vanished away. We find, however, that their place is taken by myriads of other forms, not diaphanous and ethereal, like the fairies and elves, but solid and substantial, some teeming with life, some inorganic and extra-terrestrial, which crowd the lower ranges of the great aerial ocean by which we are surrounded.

To form some faint idea of the infinite profusion of these extraneous occupants of the atmosphere, it is only necessary to bore a hole in the closed shutter of a room, through which the direct rays of the sun may shine, and, with a powerful double hand—magnifying glass to examine the ray of light projected through the aperture. The first thought inspired by the marvellous spectacle is one of wonder that it is possible to escape instant suffocation, for the air appears so heavily charged with masses of solid impurities, mostly of inconceivably grotesque and fanciful form, that it is difficult to imagine how breathing can be carried on. It would be impossible to describe the heterogeneous collection of matter which is so thickly floating about, and so weird is the appearance that if a magnified photograph could be taken of the ray it would be received with utter incredulity.

The floating corpuscles of the atmosphere, when microscopically analysed, are found to consist, in addition to the minute detritus of almost everything on the surface of the earth which the winds could take up, of cosmic dust from burnt up meteors or "shooting stars," of living infusoria, with also myriads of their skeletons, minute seeds and eggs, portions of human epidermis, carbon, in towns in profuse abundance, perhaps neutralizing the deleterious effect of the more noxious particles, with microbes, bacilli, and innumerable other organic and inorganic substances.

The old-time fancies with reference to fairies and gnomes had, however, a solid basis of truth about them. For although there are no sprites or elfins dancing in the moonlight round toadstools, yet the air is full of ethereal beings hovering around us, some desperately striving to drag us down to

perdition, some as anxiously desiring to see us keep to the paths of rectitude and obedience. And if only a child of man could see with mortal eye for a single moment these bright angels, and these black hovering spirits, surely he would cry with passionate earnestness to the Eternal, for the Saviour's sake, to enrol him amongst His children, and to give him divine strength to resist the evil. Then would they flee away and be discomfited, while those bright angels would close around him and ever minister to him.

### OBITUARY.

#### MR. MICHAEL BENOIT.

The parish of St. Anne's mourns the loss of one of its best young men, Michael Benoit, son of Francis Benoit and Bridget Neville. He was born 24 years ago at Lyndock, County of Renfrew, Ont., his father being a devout French-Canadian, his mother a truly Catholic Irishwoman. By his thoroughly Christian spirit, his love of work, his thriftiness and sobriety, Michael was a model for all the young men about St. Anne's. He had never tasted any intoxicating beverage, and even during the attack of typhoid fever that carried him off he steadily refused to take any. "No liquor has ever passed my lips," he said, "and I won't let it do so now." He died as he had lived, a faithful Catholic, fortified with all the last rites of Holy Church. Generously yielding up his young life to his Maker, he said to his devoted pastor, Rev. Father Giroux, "I would like to live; but, if it is the will of God, I am ready to offer my life to Him."

The Sunday before his death, he said to his mother, "Don't forget to send the children to Mass." Towards eleven o'clock he added, "Mother, are you ready to recite the Rosary?" Thus he went to his account in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

At the end the typhoid fever changed into inflammation of the lungs. This excellent family is sorely tried. For almost seven weeks there has been typhoid in the house: First the father, then the only daughter, eighteen years of age, and then one of the boys, of whom there now remain six. The father and daughter have received the last sacraments, and seem to be on the mend.

Michael was the last to catch the fever and the first to succumb. Father Giroux says he has lost in him the pearl of his younger flock.

R. I. P.

#### LORD RUSSELL'S OPINION OF A TRUTHFUL WITNESS.

"Cross-examination," says Lord Russell, "rarely hurts a really honest witness. People think that anything can be done by cross-examination; but, as a matter of fact, if a witness is honest, it can do very little. Speaking for myself, I can say that I never rise to cross-examine a witness with any heart or interest unless, from something I know of him from my brief or from his demeanor in the box, I have reason to believe that he is not telling the truth." —*Gerald Stephens, in Nov. Donahoe's*.

#### MARIE CORELLI.

(The New Century, Washington, D.C.)

Marie Corelli's "Master Christian" is a good example of the present craze for teaching everything by means of the novel. The amateur theologian, like Mrs. Humphrey Ward; the amateur philosopher, like Mr. James Lane Allen, and a number of others insist that their mission is to teach instead of to make life more unendurable by the exercise of their gift of storytelling.

Marie Corelli is, of all living writers, the most incapable of teaching anything. She writes in a glare of red fire. She lives in a world of her own creation. She knows less of life than Ouida, and she has all the contortions of that literary sibyl, without any of her genius.

She is adored by the average Englishman. And this, so far as taste goes, is the worst thing you can say about her — for the average Englishman is the most inartistic creature living. In the "Master Christian" she grasps the planets, the lesser stars, the heaven and earth and protoplasm, and makes an iridescent bolus of the whole mass which she tries to force down the throat of the dazed reader.

In "Barabbas," — which was widely read by Catholics because some paragrapher announced that the Oracular Marie was of the faith — she shows us how sweet, simple, and balmy Judas was, and what a grizzled old hypocrite she would like St. Peter to be. Before "Barabbas" appeared she had invented an electric religion; — five draughts of Buddhism in solution with an equal quantity of the essence of evolution, with a good deal of bad whiskey and a red cherry or two probably expresses the concoction in words worthy of it. Her characters never lived in world — therefore, she made of them romances of two worlds. Her appeal was to those so uneducated by contact with good literature that they could not see the difference between corrupt rhetoric and honest expression.

Wise, in her own conceit, she wraps her flame-colored robe about her, crowns herself with tinsel stars, gives stage directions for thunder and lightning, and utters thousands of weird and amazing tin-plate prophecies.

Hall Cain was foolish enough in "The Christian" — he showed how silly the expert novelist can be when he tries to be an expert theologian — but the "Master Christian" has capped the climax; it is the apotheosis of self-conceit, the acme of complacent ignorance, a cataract of verbiage and an avalanche of stilted nonsense.

Miss Corelli's vogue shows how unconvincing is popularity. She has succeeded in selling more books than any other living author. She is beloved in the rustic home and adored by the city hearth-stone — all of which goes to show that the masses of the people ought to be educated in the essentials of taste, as well as in the essential three R's.

This is, of course, rank aristocracy — rank intellectual aristocracy? Probably — yet intellectual aristocracy is not a bad thing, if it keeps the minds of rich and poor alike from admiration of such fantasmagorias as the "Master Christian."