

or an Earl that of Duke, is perhaps natural enough, but why they, whose rank dates from the Conquest, should wish to merge their honourable and ancient distinctions into either that of the new-fangled grade of a Viscount or Marquis seems strange. The ordinary rustic, it is true, sees in a Lord a great man, in an Earl a very great man, and in a Duke the greatest man of all; and it would seem as if this same sentiment is cultivated by the Peer. They value rank as rank only, not as history, and test it by the only scale open to them, namely precedence, and thus the old title with its glorious associations is too often merged into a new, though superior, one. There can be no doubt of the anxiety for fresh steps, and that too, when in the case of speaker Brand, promotion seems to outsiders a positive loss, since for every step conceded the Premier refuses half-a-dozen urgent applications. Peers seem to be without historic mind. Amongst themselves they are distinguished first by their power, next by their wealth. They would place Lord Palmerston before the late Viscount Hertford, at the same time they would rank the late Lord Overstone far ahead of Lord Kingsale, whose family is as old as the monarchy, or Lord Sudely, who is a lineal descendant of Rollo. It would generally be thought that to be a peer at all was enough; but the curious fact must remain, that a title weighs with its bearer as with commoner folk. If pedigree entered into the question of rank as elsewhere, the advancement of twenty-third Baron Dacre to first Viscount Hampden would be ludicrous, the Viscount being of yesterday, the Baron a Norman peer.

CIVIL-SERVICE Reform, in the opinion of the *Current*, ought to embody strong efforts to do away with a great deal of the expensive state, municipal, and county government with which Americans burden themselves. It would be astounding, no doubt, to contemplate the actual figures of the cost of these governments. The census does not give it; no statistician has given more than a large guess. Half the citizens are employed desperately working to get money to pay salaries to the official class. Perhaps if people could be made to see the folly of such over-government and over-taxation, they would adopt a more economical system: one which would make them more prosperous and contented.

"ECONOMY is the death of a newspaper," said Emile de Girardin. M. Charles Lalou, who has stepped into the shoes of Emile de Girardin in more senses than one, is following out the advice of his predecessor. Not only has he purchased the newspaper property, *La France*, but he has made himself possessor of the splendid residence of its late proprietor in the Rue La Pérouse. Everything in the *hôtel* is as De Girardin left it, even to carpet, curtains, and pictures. There is the dining-room with the table at which have sat Gladstone, Thiers, Gambetta, Gounod, Dumas, and, at times, most of the prominent personalities of the age in art, letters, and politics. There, too, is the small elegantly-furnished drawing-room, where some of the most brilliant women of private and professional circles used to meet. At these *réunions* a game then much in vogue, called *Définitions*, was often played. On one occasion "Girardin" was the word chosen to be defined. When each person present had written his definition upon a scrap of paper and dropped it into a vase, the host, turning to Théophile Gautier, who stood aloof, said: "And you, my dear Théo, are you unable to give a definition of me?" "No," said the poet; "but I prefer that my definition should not be anonymous." "Let us hear it then," said De Girardin. Théophile Gautier said: "Emile de Girardin is a tiger, who has spent his life in eating a bolster."

FROM Sol Smith Russell, in his variety entertainment, to J. T. Keene in tragedy, is a change which at least possesses the charm of variety, and the mixture seems to suit the Toronto amusement-seeker's palate judging by the large audiences which assembled in the Grand Opera House last week, though, as usual, Shakespere played second fiddle to comic songs and burlesque. Mr. Keene's impersonation of "Hamlet" is one of the finest histrionic conceptions of the day. Mr. Keene, however, like Mr. Booth and so many other players, depends too much upon his own powers, his support being lamentably weak. "Polonius," for example, was burlesqued by a comedian, "Horatio" was marrowless, the Queen was heavy and forced, whilst, with the single exception of "Ophelia" the other characters do not call for comment. Laertes' sister in parts was well played, and in his delineation Mr. Keene makes the mad Dane much more devoted to her than does any other "Hamlet." Whilst Mr. Keene has not hesitated to play an original conception of the Prince of Denmark, he does so without taking liberties with the text, and the result is a production eminently agreeable to students of Shakespere.

WEISS'S LIFE OF CHRIST.*

WHEN we consider the profound interest of the subject, we can hardly wonder at the multiplication of *Lives* of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is perhaps more astonishing that this work should hardly have been seriously undertaken until the present century. Whether the greatness of the subject and the surpassing beauty of the four Gospels deterred early writers, as they have deterred many of later times, we cannot say. It is at least clear that believers and unbelievers have, during the last century, given an amount of attention to the earthly history of Christ which had never previously been bestowed upon it.

In the first ages the attitude of the Church was partly aggressive, partly apologetic. She had to carry her message into all the world, and she had to defend its contents against Jew and Gentile. Her next great work was the overthrow of heresies which sprung up within her own bosom. When this had been done—when, at least, the approved doctrine had been formulated and the heretical condemned—the next step was to reduce to system the various doctrines of the faith. This was the chief work of men like Thomas Aquinas and the Schoolmen.

The Reformation made no change in this respect. Some of the doctrines of the mediæval church were agitated; but the Confessions of the Reformed were, in their way, a reproduction of the creeds and doctrinal canons of the early councils, and the systems of theology were constructed after the manner of the Schoolmen.

For a time the war was simply between Confessions. It was only when the attacks were made, not upon the outworks of the churches, but upon the citadel of the faith, that theologians came to understand that they must change their mode of warfare.

At the time of the Reformation, Scripture-study was directed to the epistles, especially to the epistles of St. Paul. Here would be found the arguments by which the erroneous theories—on the one side or the other—respecting the disputed doctrine of Justification could be refuted. In later days, study has been directed more to the Gospels, and to the central object of their testimony.

It was Paulus, of Heidelberg, who first produced a complete and systematic "Life of Christ," written from a distinct point of view, according to which all the incidents were regarded. The Wolfenbüttel Fragments had sown the seed of Rationalism broadcast in Germany, and there had ensued a wide unbelief in the supernatural, among the clergy as well as the laity. Paulus took in hand to show that the contents of the Gospels might be received as substantially true, while the miraculous element was denied.

After him were Strauss with his mythical theory, which almost entirely supplemented the "Rationalistic" method of Paulus. It must indeed always be considered a great merit in Strauss's work that he exposed the utter absurdity of the rationalistic method of dealing with the miracles; since he showed with irresistible force that the miraculous was an essential part of the narrative, and that to remove it was to leave a mass of fragments, the existence of which was inexplicable.

Strauss's own theory was far more sweeping. He got rid of the whole history. Parts of it might be legendary or they might not. The essential truth, according to his view, was this: that the history of Christ was the product of the imagination of the people. The events of the history were mere embodied ideas. A Messiah was expected, and the Messianic expectation attached itself to Jesus. Whatever the Messiah was expected to be, Jesus must be. Hence the floating notions became stories and were put on record as facts.

Thirty years ago the mythical theory was the favourite form of unbelief. But this, too, has had its day. Apart from other difficulties, it became clear that the period of time within which the Gospel narratives took the form in which they have come down to us was utterly insufficient for the generation of myths. Perhaps Renan, although unintentionally, hastened, as much as any other writer, the downfall of the theory of Strauss. He had been one of his followers; but the soil of Palestine was too powerful as a witness for the history, and he produced a book of no great scientific value and full of inconsistencies, yet the result of extensive learning and of much thought, and presented in a form which could hardly fail to be attractive. It was one of the results of Renan's book that Strauss produced a new Life of Jesus, written from a slightly different point of view, and finally abandoning the mythical theory, yet giving more prominence to the rationalistic and legendary view, and, as he explained, making some use of the theory of conscious imposture. In this respect he fell back to near the point of view of the Wolfenbüttel Fragments.

Since the publication of Renan's *Vie de Jésus* we have had quite a shower

* *Das Leben Jesu* von Bernhard Weiss (2 vols.) Berlin, English translation (in 3 vols., 2 published), Edinburgh.