

Palaeologus.

When Palaeologus felt the approaching hour,
His heart foretold his fearful doom,
Pale victim of the Moslem power,
Last of the Greeks, the last of Rome.

And Honour weeping pointed to the path
To expiate his country's shame,
For her he fell, with rapine and with wrath
The turbaned conquerors onward came.

Ascendant Glory viewed the falling Brave,
Proudly triumphing o'er his foe's despite
He guards within a solitary grave,
A deathless name, a deathless light.

G. C. R.

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Letters to the Editor.

THE SILVER QUESTION.

SIR,—I am sorry to see that our good neighbours south of line 45° are still in danger from an attack of the silver craze in its most virulent form, combined with Free Coinage, which some of their papers tell us is favoured by three-fourths of their electors. As to these the case is simply that the scheme is a new but not honest way to pay old debts with coin worth only about one-half their amount, the number of debtors being probably about four to one of the creditors. You will remember that I and your worthy correspondent, Mr. S. E. Dawson, had, in 1893, a friendly discussion in THE WEEK on the Bi-metal question, he taking the Bi and I the Mono side, and that I did then, as I do now, maintain that it is impossible that two metals of fluctuating value with respect to each other and to property of any kind, can be advantageously and honestly used as standards of value and made legal tender in the same country and at the same time, in payment of debts of all kinds and of all amounts, giving, as I thought and think, valid reasons for my belief, which you will find in my letter printed in THE WEEK of the 24th February, 1893, and by which I abide, as I do, also, by my assertion in my letter of the 26th of the same month: "That if our Government will give us plenty of our own Canadian silver, we shall have the best currency in the world—decimal, convenient and sound; following the good example of England in using the three metals, but improving on it by adopting the decimal system and, as in England, limiting the legal tender quality of the two inferior metals in any one payment." You may, perhaps, like to refer to my letter. I make no pretension to originality in the arguments used in them, though they contained, perhaps, the first statement of them in any Canadian journal. W.

Ottawa, 8th August, 1896.

FISKE'S BEGINNING OF NEW ENGLAND.

SIR,—My attention was directed to Mr. Fiske's suggestive book on the "Beginning of New England," by some criticisms in a recent article in THE WEEK, objecting to its being placed on a list prepared for students by a committee of Toronto University. Since I read that article I have enjoyed the perusal of this book with very great pleasure and profit. I must say that I am at a loss to understand why the writer of the article in question should have called it a book written "in order to glorify the American republic." So far from this, the actual story of the "Beginning of New England" occupies not much more than the third part of a small volume of about 300 pages; the larger portion being taken up with the beginning of Constitutional Government in general. The origin of our modern democratic institutions is traced out into the remote past of the Teutonic peoples, and contrasted with the history and tendency of the Roman Empire, which, as other writers have pointed out, cannot properly be said to have ended in the fifth century when the throne of the Caesars was first occupied by a barbaric conqueror. The two streams and ideals of government—the imperial ideal of rule from above or without, and the democratic ideal of government for the people by the people, which has moulded our modern representative institutions—are traced, in their respective antagonistic courses, up to the beginning of the present century. The debt of humanity to the Christian Church throughout what are popularly termed the dark

ages—especially in modifying the tyrannous sway of the imperial ideal—is candidly and generously acknowledged. The rise of what is known as "Puritanism," which has been so beneficent a force in the long struggle for civil and religious liberty, is traced, in the "Separatists" who came from the Balkan, the Waldenses of France, and the Lollards of England, and also now points out how political and geographical conditions determined the very different fates of the "Protestant" reaction in France and in Britain.

The series of European complications which resulted in the memorable expedition on the "Mayflower" to the shores of New England, and of the other bands which followed, are carefully disentangled, and we get a clear idea of the rise and progress of the little cluster of settlements finally grouped together under the name of New England, as well as of the foes without and the dissensions within which menaced the existence of these pioneer settlements. Scarcely anything, however, is said of the raids on the New England colonies from New France; the havoc wrought by the three war parties and the massacre of Schenectady. These do not seem to loom so largely in the history of New England as in that of New France, and it is rather with the relations of the Colonies to the Mother Country, and the gradual development of the power of self-government that Mr. Fiske chiefly concerns himself. The struggles of the colonists to save their rights and liberties, under the tyranny of Charles II. and his son, give an interesting glimpse of the way in which history repeats itself; and as these struggles are not complicated with the irritation which still bristles about the period of the Revolution, there is no reason why the most ultra-loyal Briton should object to it. The story of that section of our race which has grown into such a nation as that to the south of us, is surely of the very greatest interest to us, and should be included in any adequate programme of education in history.

FIDELIS.

ENGLISH IN THE SCHOOLS.

SIR,—Of all subjects studied in the schools, whether elementary or advanced, English is, without doubt, the most important.

Not only is it important as a mere item of the curriculum; without its agency no instruction in the other branches of the curriculum can be intelligently imparted.

Classics we might do without—Athens is dust, Rome but a name—what is best of their intellectual life is with us, done into English by such scholars as Morshead, Worsley, Lang, Myers, Munro, Chapman, Pope, Derby, Gladstone; French and German are not indispensable to the Briton or his descendants; we may compel, nay, we do compel foreigners to assume our own speech. So with other tongues; they are accomplishments, not necessities; ornaments, not fundamentals. Science is admirable; but, until the last few decades, the world got along very well upon its bare elements. Man believed in the nobility of man, and the apishness of the ape. All this is changed, doubt and even despair have usurped the throne of Immortality. Mathematics, outside of the ordinary measurements and simpler calculations, may be ignored by the average man or woman. It is a fine thing to know the distance to the nearest fixed star; but the bread-winner who toils ten hours a day for a loaf cares more for the price of wheat, than for all the trigonometrical formulæ and computations which fix, not seldom inaccurately, the distances of nebulae and comets and such-like itinerant departures from the orbit of his daily labour and daily pain.

But the mother-speech he must have, in which to think, in which to converse, in which to read, in which to live and love and die. It is his mental food. The average man can exist without the physical luxuries of life, but he must have bread; he can exist without the *onomics*, the *ologies* and the *isms* of hyperculture, but he must have his mother-tongue. It is born with him, it endures with him, it progresses with him, it perishes with him so far as he is concerned. With him it dies or lives again. If not, with what speech and with what knowledge shall he answer to the roll-call of that Other host?

English is an essential, a bare essential of education, consequently it has been the fashion to ignore it—as it is fashionable to ignore much that is nearest and most familiar—and to assume with a new-found apishness of pedigree, apishness of finery and superficiality of all descriptions, *ergo*,