

PHILOSOPHICAL PUZZLES.

THERE was a day when philosophy was a young science, and it in that far time had, to a slight extent, the playful habits of youth, when it would in rare moments forget its usual occupation of arranging and fathoming the universe, and with ponderous humour, by the mouth of a disciple, give forth some puzzle of a more amusing character than the great problems of existence and knowledge, the discovery of whose solution formed its principal business, and to which desirable end it is still busily engaged.

Thus, the celebrated and well-known puzzle of Achilles and the tortoise was invented by Zeno of Ela some centuries before Christ, and furnishes a good example of this philosophical play. This problem is as follows: If Achilles and a tortoise were to run a race, and Achilles were to run ten times as fast as the tortoise, if the latter had the start, Achilles would never overtake the tortoise, as can be thus shewn. Suppose them at the starting of Achilles to be separated by a space of a thousand feet, when Achilles has run this thousand, the tortoise would have run a hundred, and when Achilles had run this hundred, the tortoise would have run ten, and so on forever. This sophism has even been considered insoluble by many philosophers, and among others by Dr. Thomas Brown, since it actually leads to an absurd conclusion by a sound argument.

Amongst other famous ancient dialectic problems are the following dilemmas, which are framed with wonderful ingenuity, the acuteness displayed in their construction being probably unsurpassed. The first is called Syllogismus Crocodilus, and may be thus stated: An infant, while playing on the bank of a river, was seized by a crocodile. The mother, hearing its cries, rushed to its assistance, and by her tearful entreaties obtained a promise from the crocodile (who was obviously of the highest intelligence) that he would give it her back if she would tell him truly what would happen to it. On this, the mother, (perhaps rashly) asserted: "You will not give it back." The crocodile answers to this: "If you have spoken truly, I cannot give back, the child without destroying the truth of your assertion; if you have spoken falsely, I cannot give back the child, because you have not fulfilled the agreement; therefore, I cannot give it back whether you have spoken truly or falsely." The mother retorted: "If I have spoken truly, you must give back the child, by virtue of your agreement; if I have spoken falsely, that can only be when you have given back the child; so that whether I have spoken truly or falsely, the child must be given back." History is silent as to the issue of this remarkable dispute.

Of a similar nature is the other example above mentioned, which is even more acutely stated. A young man named Euathlus received lessons in rhetoric from Protagoras, it being agreed that a certain fee should be paid if the pupil was successful in the first cause he pleaded. Euathlus, however, neglected to undertake any cause, and Protagoras, in order to obtain his fee, was compelled to sue him. Euathlus defended himself in the court, and it was consequently the young man's first suit. The master argued thus: "If I be successful in this cause, O Euathlus, you will be compelled to pay by virtue of the sentence of these righteous judges; and should I even be unsuccessful, you will then have to pay me in fulfilment of your original contract." To this the apt pupil replied: "If I be successful, O master, I shall be free by the sentence of these righteous judges; and even if I be unsuccessful, I shall be free by virtue of the contract." The story states that such convincing arguments thus diametrically opposed completely staggered the judges, who being quite unable to decide, postponed the judgment *sine die*.

A celebrated instance of ingenious fallacy is that propounded as a just argument by Diodorus Chironus, who, by this fallacy, claimed to prove the impossibility of motion. He argues thus: All that a body does, must be done either in the place where it is, or else the place where it is not. Now, it can not move in the place where it is, and much less can it move in the place where it

is not. Consequently, it cannot move at all, and therefore motion is impossible. It is related that the inventor of this sophism on one occasion dislocated his shoulder, and was compelled to send for a surgeon to set it. The leech assured the philosopher that the shoulder could not possibly be put out at all, since it could not be out in the place in which it was, nor neither in the place in which it was not.

The inverting argument of the lying Cretans is well known; but the reader will excuse its quotation for the sake of illustration, and for the chance of its being new to some out of the many. St. Paul says (Titus i. 12, 13): "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said: The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true." The Cretans being always liars; the prophet was a Cretan, therefore he was a liar, and lied when he said they were always liars. Consequently, the Cretans are not always liars. Again, since he was a Cretan, he was not always a liar. Therefore, the Cretans are always liars, and so on *ad infinitum*.

With regard to more trivial instances of logical profanity, I must quote one which is frequently employed in private life with much exasperating effect, and is also found by cross-examining counsel, a serviceable mode of confounding a witness, and simultaneously throwing dust in the eyes of a jury. It consists in desiring to have either a direct negative or affirmative answer to a question, which, being done, a question respecting any desired improbability can then be asked, as, for instance: "Have you cut off your 'ail yet?" If the answer be yes, it is of course an admission that the examinee once had a tail; while, if the reply be no, it is assumed to be an admission that he still possesses that unusual personal ornament. A somewhat similar process is involved in the inquiry of the man; "How long he has left off beating his father?" It will be seen what a wide field of vexation a skilful use of this process can command. As an example, in strong contrast to the foregoing, the following problem may be cited as an interesting but somewhat hopeless subject of inquiry—namely, What is the effect of an irresistible force striking an immovable sphere?

It may be observed with regard to the foregoing illustrations, that they start from the borders of serious argument, and descending by degrees, they travel first through ingenious, and then trivial quibbles. Continuing the descent, we should finally arrive in the extensive region of jokes, but, before arriving at that stage of debasement it is better to quit the subject.

NINETY-EIGHT AND SIXTY-FIVE.

A GREAT amount of harm may be caused by speaking and writing of the Irish rebellion of ninety-eight and the present Fenian conspiracy, as if they were similar, when in truth they have little in common.

Until about the year 1600, Ireland was with the exception of about twenty miles around Dublin independent of England, the septs or clans followed their own customs and the Breton laws. During the next sixty years this newly conquered people were still further estranged by the confiscation of their lands, upwards of five hundred thousand acres were confiscated in the province of Ulster alone in the reign of James I, then followed the cruel wars and confiscations of Cromwell, and before many of those who thus suffered were in their graves the peace was again broken by the war of 1690, succeeded by the penal laws separating the Roman Catholic Irish from all interest in the well-being of the state, and making them a proscribed and outcast race. They could not sit in Parliament, all their priests were banished, they could not intermarry with Protestants, they could not become solicitors. If a son turned protestant, his father could not leave his property to his other children, but the renegade became heir to the exclusion of all the rest. No papists could possess a horse of greater value than five pounds, neither could they give or take long leases. In 1778, only twenty years before the outbreak—the first relaxation of these laws took

place. Up to that date the whole course of the Legislature for Ireland had been to keep alive a spirit of Irish nationality and a deep hatred of the Saxon invader.

The volunteer movement of 1782 had shown the strength Ireland possessed if it could be brought out. And the French Revolution had called up a restless impatience not only of wrong but of all old established rule. In Ireland, five sixths of the population were debarred from the rights of freemen, and were ruled by the remaining sixth, and even of that sixth there were many men, young and foolish, no doubt, but full of love for abstract right and justice, and of sympathy for their countrymen. From this class, the leaders of the rebellion were taken, but it is doubtful whether they could have roused the peasantry to fight were it not that the government employed the yeomanry to search for arms. This employment of men under few restraints of discipline, and animated by a most ferocious hatred of those whose dwellings they were employed to search, aggravated if it did not cause the rebellion. The animosity occasioned by too frequently fatal party fights now manifested itself in the form of floggings, pitch cappings and picketings inflicted on the unfortunate papists, in order to wring from them confessions of having arms concealed. The bridge of Wexford and the barn of Scullabogue were the atrocious retaliation of an ignorant and savage peasantry for the outrages they had suffered; but the barbarity was not all on their side. Lord Cornwallis, the then Lord Lieutenant, mentions one or two cases of cruel murder committed by protestants, which in atrocity if possible excelled the other. Such being the condition of Ireland in 1798, was rebellion to be wondered at? It was a question with most Irishmen not so much of right as of expediency; and most thoughtful men, while lamenting the course pursued, will respect the motives of the men of '98 who rose in dark and evil days,

"To right their native land."

Very different indeed is the case in 1865; eighty-seven years have passed since the first relaxation of the penal laws, and very few of those who could take the field can recollect the passage of the measure that emancipated the Catholics from their civil disabilities. There are no real grievances now, and Fenian discontent lives upon tradition. The past glories of Ireland handed down from father to son have lost nothing by the transmission, until the idea of what they have lost is burlesqued by the song:

Oh wo once were an elegant people,
Though we now live in cabins of mud;
And the land that ye see from the steeples
Belonged to us all from the flood.
Then my uncle was king of Tyrone
And my grand-aunt vicé-roy of Tralee,
But the Sassenach came and sign on it,
The devil an acre have we.

This discontent may make them clamour for tenant right, shoot a hard landlord, and let off steam in seditious speeches. It may furnish material for claptrap speeches among the orators of "Blusterland," but it never would rouse to any overt act of rebellion any one who had anything to lose.

FRONTENAC, U. E.

ARTEMUS WARD. *

Mr. Ward, traveller, showman, philosopher, has won for himself an extended reputation, and many of our readers have doubtless thoroughly enjoyed the perusal of his varied adventures described with racy humour, couched in wonderful orthography. Mr. Worthington is about to issue a series of reprints of Standard Novels, and "Artemus Ward (His Travels)" is the first instalment. It is reprinted from the American copyright edition, and in paper and typography compares favourably with American books of its class.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

MAPLE LEAVES.—A budget of Legendary, Historical, Critical, and Sporting Intelligence, first, second, and third series, by J. Le Moine Esq., Quebec. Messrs. Dawson, Bros., Montreal.

DANTE.—As a Philosopher, Patriot, and Poet. R. Worthington, Montreal.

* Artemus Ward (His travels). R. Worthington, Montreal. Paper covers 60c.