

with the effulgent record of centuries of philanthropic activity, a demise so inglorious should fittingly be remembered by this epitaph on a lichen-eaten headstone in the most secluded corner of the world's great cemetery :

"Here lies, cold as an icicle,
BIBLE RELIGION, killed by a bicycle :
Afflictions sore long time he bore,
Physicians were in vain ;
For the pneumatic tire hath sent him up higher,
And cured him of his pain."

Wanting data, and being more or less gloriously uncertain with regard to facts and their differentiation from fables, many old-world historians have at all times been sorely puzzled and perplexed. This applies solely to the secular annalist. Your Christ-biographer and ecclesiastical historian have never experienced much difficulty in making one or two half-truths serve as foundation for a huge structure of inventions. Bicycles and women's clubs are, however, substantial verities, both proper to the nineteenth century in its later decades, so that the coming historian will find his task comparatively easy. And since,—a hundred critical gadflies notwithstanding,—Gibbon's fifteenth and sixteenth chapters still remain as the standard of impartial history as envisaged by the philosopher, the coming historian can scarcely do better than take it as his model, in which event his exordium may be something like this :

"Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith was so speedily and tranquilly disavowed and subverted in the twentieth century after the supposed birth of the half-mythical child whom superstition exalted into a deity. To this inquiry an obvious and satisfactory answer may be returned : that it was owing to the invention and rapid popularization of a cheap and ready means of locomotion, from whose advantages few, if any, were debarred, and to the adoption by woman of a medium of promoting that social intercourse which has ever been so dear to her heart, and by which the recognition of her mental, moral, and social equality with man has been so satisfactorily and universally assisted."

Taking this as his base, our historian will proceed to explain that the bicycle was the main factor in introducing the inhabitants of cities to a grander temple than any ever made by human hands, of familiarizing them with the ritual of rivulet, forest, and the songs of birds, and the perennial incense of flower-perfumed breezes freighted with the richest ozone from ocean and mountain-top. He will show how rapidly man, so long divorced from Nature, learned to love the "sweet mother," while,—as Matthew Arnold so grandly sings,—

"She to him will reach her hand,
And gazing in his eyes will stand,
And know her friend and weep for gloe,
And cry : 'Long, long I've looked for thee.'"

He will demonstrate, moreover, that woman, mainly by her own unaided determination, effected her own emancipation from the divine-incarnation doctrine which for so many ages induced, and often compelled, her to sacrifice chastity of body and freedom of will to the lecherous brutes who regarded her as an unhallowed vehicle for the gratification of their lowest passions. And it may well be that by means of the art-preservative (printing) the very words of the independent Ch. ago minister may be used to show that in the last year of the nineteenth century there were 1,128,848 persons out of a population of two millions, in one American city, who made absolutely no profession of religious belief, and from this he will

logically conclude,—as we ourselves should do,—that even then the majority of the American people were not Christian even in name.

Take courage, therefore, all ye who are spending and being spent in the cause of intellectual redemption ! Be of good cheer ! for the people are not quite so obtuse as sometimes ye have deemed them to be. At least, they are not pledged to the shibboleth of any form of superstition ; in due time they will come to the light, and that, too, all the surer because neither taboo nor excommunication can be placed upon their rational enjoyments. In the field of wise and healthy pleasure reason has her strongest ally.

Piety up to Date.

ENGLAND is much richer in holy hoax than she was only quite recently. The source of England's greatness has been augmented. Cardinal Vaughan has received for the new Westminster Cathedral three large particles of the Crown of Thorns, worn by "Our Lord." These particles were presented to Pius IX. by a member of the royal family of Piedmont. After the death of that Pope, they were given to Mr. H. Grissell by the then Cardinal Vicar of Rome, and by him duly authenticated ; he found them to be the very thorns—three of Jesus Christ's hairs sticking to them, and a segment of the halo. It is intended to place these relics in one of the chapels of the Westminster Cathedral.

There are certain other relics which Cardinal Vaughan has not yet received ; but, if he go on, prayerfully, he will receive them in Heaven's own good time and way. These will, I presume, comprise two intensely sacred relics referred to by Burns, viz :

That which distinguished the gender,
O' Balaam's ass ;
The broomstick o' the Witch o' Endor,
Weel shod wi' brass.

I should think the talking-ass, that also prays and brays and burns incense, has still a good deal to distinguish its gender, or Cardinal Vaughan and his like would very shortly find his occupation gone. It is always the lower types and the block-heads that are so racially prolific. John Stuart Mill had no progeny, but not so General Booth and his gang. Herbert Spencer has been fertile in books, but sterile in bairns. A certain very despicable insect—the hero of one of the Egyptian Plagues—can become a grandfather in twenty-four hours. A follower of Vaughan or Booth is not quite so fecundly expeditious : still he leaves the philosopher far, far behind. And so there is a perennial crop of dupes to gape and fling pence at a bit of thorn, that, a few years ago, may have been growing in a hedge in Kent, if, indeed, it be fair to give it by hypothesis an origin so reputable.

Even under our very noses counterfeits and shams of all kinds, sacred and secular, are being faked up for the starving, paying masses of easily begotten, easily gulled humanity. A recent article in the *Chronicle* takes us behind the scenes and tells how illustrations of battles in South Africa, for instance, are made for the delectation of John and Janet Smith. Scattered all over Europe are manufactories of ancient relics which are sold to travellers. Coins, ceramics, medals, seals, anything and everything that human ambition would love to exhibit in homes, or in museums, even ancient mummies, are imitated. Manuscripts on every variety of subject are simulated to meet the market. Go in any direction and fraud is met with, save when "sacred literature" or "sacred relics," after they have been stealthily hidden, are found in some ruined monastery, or are exhumed in some old abbey. Such finds are always genuine, always inspirations of God, saved by special Providence for the benefit of the Church.

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SALADIN.