

The Dominion Review.

VOL. III.

JANUARY, 1898.

NO. 1.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON CIVILIZATION.

BY B. F. UNDERWOOD.

I.

THE advocates of Christianity commonly represent, and the masses under the sway of their teachings sincerely believe, that to the influence of their system is justly ascribable the civilization of the nineteenth century. But for the enlightenment which has come from this faith, they tell us, we would to-day be in a state of darkness and degradation, but little, if any, superior to that of the savages whose condition we so much pity and deplore. Let the light of this religion be extinguished, and, we are assured, nothing but another intervention of God could prevent the relapse of the civilized nations of the world into a state of barbarism. Only where Christianity has shed its benign influence, it is said, have nations attained to real greatness, or individuals been able to discover the true principles of moral duty. A contrast between the nations of the world in which the blessings of this faith are enjoyed, and those to which Christianity has never extended, or in which it has been replaced by some other religion, should, we are told, satisfy any candid mind, of its elevating and enlightening power. And, still further say its defenders, in view of the manifold evidences which attest its beneficent tendency, opposition to it, or denial of its divine character, can proceed only from a perverted mind or a depraved heart. These are common representations. If the most able and distinguished advocates of Christianity do not set them forth in the manner in which I have stated them; if some of them qualify their claims so as to somewhat weaken their force, and give the opponents of their faith less cause to question their fairness, they yet generally allow these popular assumptions to remain uncontradicted—fearing, perhaps, that by destroying belief in them they might weaken confidence in the system itself, so intimately are they associated in the popular mind; while the majority of the Christian clergymen who speak directly to the people, and of Christian writers who fill up the orthodox papers, and whose writings constitute the cheap and popular religious literature of the land, take essentially the position I have stated, and in language not much unlike that which I have used. So familiar are the people with these representations, so frequently are they repeated by men respected for their supposed learning and candor, that to raise a question concern-

ing them is to incur the charge of ignorance, of a disposition to cavil, or even of downright dishonesty.

I propose to examine in this lecture some of these assumptions of the advocates of Christianity, and to inquire whether its influence has been altogether good, and whether the world is largely indebted to it for its present advanced condition.

In the first place, the Christian who affirms that intellectual and moral greatness is incompatible with the absence of Christianity, forgets, in his zeal for his faith, that civilizations of a high type preceded, by many centuries, the advent of the Christian religion. Not to speak of other nations, ancient Greece may be referred to as a familiar illustration of the fact that man has been able to attain to a very high degree of advancement independently of any revealed system of faith. The Greeks were certainly a great people. To them historians trace the beginnings of our intellectual civilization. "Like their own goddess, Athenæ, the people of Athens," says Max Muller, "seem to spring full-armed into the arena of history, and we look in vain to Egypt, Syria, and India, for more than a few seeds that burst into such marvellous growth on the soil of Attica" ("Science of Language," 2nd series, p. 404).

The Greeks found the world in a state of comparative darkness, with despotic governments, with the oriental forms of society, with hereditary and powerful priesthoods, with art graceless and grotesque, with a literature only of the poorest kind, with but little science, no drama, no oratory, no history worthy the name; and yet they were able to lay the foundations of the intellectual culture of all the succeeding ages, and even to carry some of the higher arts to a degree of perfection which has never been surpassed and has hardly been equalled in the ages that have followed. Five centuries before the Christian religion appeared, there was a glory in Greece, lit up by the rays of the arts of peace and war converging there, which shone through all the nations and made it the brightest spot on earth. The greatest and noblest minds of every succeeding age have looked back upon that period with wonder and admiration. During the 2,300 years that have followed, literature in its most flourishing period has rekindled her torch at the altars of Greece, and art has gone back to the age of Pericles for her purest and noblest models. Of all the epic poems ever written, the Iliad of Homer, composed far back in the twilight of history, is probably the greatest. To-day we regard the heroic odes of Pindar as models of their kind; the orations of Demosthenes as the finest specimens of eloquence extant. The works of Plato are yet carefully studied by the profoundest and most philosophic minds. The old Greek plays are still valued for their many excellencies. The histories of Herodotus, Xenophon and Thucydides possess great merits as compositions, and are prized for the light which they throw upon the past. The statues of Greece still stand forth, after the lapse of ages, in unrivalled beauty. Modern architects have not improved on the proportions of Athenian architecture; and some of

the pictures of Athens have been pronounced by competent judges, equal in excellence to the Venus de Medicis, the Apollo Belvedere, or the Dying Gladiator.

We go back to ancient Greece not only for the beginnings of our intellectual culture, but for our ideas of personal liberty and individual rights. The government of Athens was a democracy, under which the free inhabitants were voters. No people ever had a more passionate love of liberty than the ancient Greeks.

"The popular legislator or the successful soldier might dare to encroach upon their liberties in the moment when the nation was intoxicated and dazzled with their genius, their prowess and success; but a sudden revulsion of popular feeling, and an explosion of popular indignation would overturn the one and ostracism expel the other. Thus while inconstancy and turbulence and faction seem to have been inseparable from the democratic spirit, the Athenians were certainly constant in their love of liberty, faithful in their affections for their country, and invariable in their sympathy for that genius which shed glory upon their native land. . . . In their private life the Athenians were courteous, generous and humane. Whilst bold and free in the expression of their opinions, they paid the greatest attention to rules of politeness, and were nicely delicate in points of decorum. They had a natural sense of what was becoming and appropriate, and an innate aversion to all extravagance. A graceful demeanor and a quiet dignity were distinguishing traits of Athenian character. They were temperate and frugal in their habits, and little addicted to ostentation and display. . . . All their sumptuousness and magnificence were reserved for and lavished on their public edifices and monuments of art, which made Athens the pride of Greece and the wonder of the world. Intellectually, the Athenians were remarkable for their quickness of apprehension, their nice and delicate perception, their intuitional power and their versatile genius" (Cocker's "Christianity and Greek Philosophy," p. 46).

Such was the character of the people of Athens—as described by a candid Christian scholar—a people that the clergy are accustomed to represent as destitute of all the elements of true greatness.

I may add, we go back to the same heathen land and pre-Christian times, for characters from whom the most zealous Christian cannot withhold a hearty admiration—men in whom "greatness of mind seems but second to greatness of virtue," who are referred to to-day, after Christianity has had centuries in which to show its powers in the development of character, as models of moral excellence. The disinterestedness of Timoleon, the stern justice and exalted purity of Aristides, the patriotic and self-sacrificing spirit of Leonidas and his immortal Three Hundred, the fortitude and moral courage of Socrates have never been surpassed in any Christian land, and will ever challenge the admiration of mankind. The models of Greece were pagans, and they are the models of the civilized world to-day.

Surely a people like the ancient Greeks, a people that spoke and wrote a language remarkable for its affluence and finish, with a literature of marvellous richness and beauty, works of art never surpassed and systems of philosophy which this age alone has been able to add to and advance beyond, a people that gave to the world great models of moral excellence, whose national history is replete with accounts of patriotic devotion, moral heroism, disinterestedness, and self-sacrifice, as well as great achievements of an intellectual character which have left "a lingering glory on the historic page which centuries have not been able to eclipse or dim,"—surely such a people were not devoid of the essential elements of greatness; and, although they were "heathens," but few modern nations have attained to so high a civilization. When such a people flourished ages before Christianity had its birth, can it be truthfully or candidly maintained that this religion is necessary to national greatness or personal virtue, that the absence of Christianity among us would be followed by the destruction of everything which makes life desirable, or that distinguishes the civilized man from the brutal savage?

We would not intimate that antiquity was free from great evils, that Greece herself, or even Athens, did not have her full share of them, nor would we intimate that great progress has not been made, in many respects, since the age of Pericles. The advocates of Christianity would certainly find no nation in the nineteenth century entirely civilized, if they made the absence of great evils and wrongs an indispensable condition of civilization. The practice, however, of raking together all the crimes and vices of pagan nations, and contrasting them with the virtues of Christian lands, in order to show the indebtedness of the world to their faith, is quite as unfair as would be an effort to show the superiority of pagan Rome over modern nations, by drawing dark pictures of the latter without one bright spot, and dwelling in contrast, on the noble lives, the sublime sayings, and the splendid achievements which have shed an undying lustre on the old pagan nation.

II.

Nor is it any proof of the enlightening influence of Christianity that in many respects we are, in this age, in advance of the Greeks. It would be strange, indeed, if in more than 2,000 years no nations had arisen, able, with the rich heritage Greece and Rome left to the world, to add to the achievements of those nations, and to advance beyond the position which they occupied.

The clergy, as a class, have used all their influence to make the uneducated masses believe that pagan antiquity was without any firm principles of morality, and that the beautiful precepts found in the New Testament were taught by Jesus for the first time. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There is not one moral precept in the New Testament which was not taught ages before Jesus lived. The doctrine of love, which by many is considered the chief merit of the "system" of

Jesus, was taught by Plato with as much clearness and emphasis as by the reformer of Nazareth. "Love," says the great teacher of the Academy, "is peace and goodwill among men, calm upon the waters, repose and stillness in the storm, and balm of sleep in sadness."

"Platonic love" is a phrase with which all are familiar. But this sentiment among the ancients was not confined to philosophers or poets. It is as old as human society, and has been exhibited wherever mothers have caressed their children, or friends have imperilled their lives in aiding one another; wherever patriots have died for country or philanthropists for the good of the race.

It is a great mistake to suppose, as many Christians believe, that Jesus was the first to proclaim what is known as the "Golden Rule." Scholars have frequently pointed out that the sentiment was distinctly expressed, in almost the very words ascribed to Jesus, by Confucius in China, Isocrates in Greece, and Hillel in Judea.

The disposition to act towards our fellows kindly and justly, as we would have them act towards us, is found even among savages, although their ideas of justice may not be as correct or as well-defined as those prevalent among more enlightened peoples. In Egypt and India, in Greece and Rome, all the essential principles of morality were understood as they are to-day; and the virtues of truthfulness and honesty, friendship and love were esteemed as highly as they are among us.

The doctrine of "the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man," which the clergy are still in the habit of claiming as a distinctively Christian doctrine, was taught by philosophers and poets, and understood to some extent by the people, long before the time of Jesus.

"One who knows himself," says Cicero, "will feel that he is a citizen of the whole world, holding all united by nature to be his own relatives" (*De Leg.* i. 22, 23). Numerous passages of a similar character could be given from the same author. The Stoics taught the same doctrine clearly and unequivocally. There is hardly an author of the Augustan age from whose works extracts cannot be gleaned inculcating the equality and the brotherhood of man. We can go much farther back, and find the doctrine taught quite as plainly. Aratus, a poet of Celicia, who flourished 279 B.C., says:

"Jove's presence fills all space, upholds this ball;
All need his aid; his power sustains us all,
For we his offspring are."—(*"Phenomena,"* bk. v., p. 5.)

Cleanthes, a Stoic philosopher and poet, a pupil of Zeno and who lived from 330 to 240 B.C., expresses the same sentiment in his famous "Hymn to Jupiter," as follows:

"Great and divine Father, whose names are many,
But who art one and the same unchangeable and almighty power;
O thou supreme author of nature,
That govern'st by a single unerring law;

Hail, King!

For thou art able to enforce obedience from all frail mortals,
Because we are thy offspring,
The image and echo only of thy eternal voice."

Of this poem, from which I have given but a brief extract, Doddridge says: "it contains nothing unworthy of a Christian, or, I had almost said, of an inspired pen." It is generally thought by scholars that Cleanthes is the poet from whom Paul quoted, in his address to the Athenians, when he said: "As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17: 28).

The forgiveness of enemies was enjoined by teachers long before the Christian era, and pagan antiquity is full of instances of magnanimity to fallen foes, which few of us have the lofty virtue to imitate.

The duty of self-examination is another doctrine of which it is claimed that Jesus was the first teacher; but the fact is, this was known to the ancient pagans, and Plato and Zeno taught that men should study their dreams, on the ground that they often reveal the latent tendencies of their dispositions. "Pythagoras," says Lecky, "urged his disciples daily to examine themselves when they retired to rest, and his practice soon became a recognized part of Pythagorean discipline. It was introduced into Rome with the school before the close of the Republic" ("Hist. Morals," i. 262).

Some writers, seeing the impossibility of disproving the existence of an elevated morality among the ancient pagans, have endeavored to prove that they obtained it from Jewish sources. Watson and others have attempted to trace the Theism of Plato, as well as the best part of the moral teachings of the Greeks generally, to Judea. This notion, first maintained by the Christian Fathers, is now wholly abandoned by scholars who have investigated the subject.

"The statement of Justin Martyr and Tertullian, that pagan philosophers borrowed from Jewish prophets, and the supposition that Plato had access to a Greek version of the Old Testament in Egypt, are," says the Christian writer, Rev. Dr. Croker, "obviously mere suppositions by which over-zealous Christians sought to maintain the supremacy of the Scriptures. The travels of Pythagoras are altogether mythical—the mere invention of Alexandrian writers who believed that all wisdom flowed from the East. That Plato visited Egypt at all rests on the single authority of Strabo, who lived at least four centuries after Plato; and there is no trace in his own works of Egyptian research. His pretended travels in Phœnicia, where he gained from the Jews a knowledge of the true God, are more unreliable still. Plato lived in the fifth century before Christ (430 B.C.), and there is no good evidence of the existence of a Greek version of the Old Testament before that of the Seventy (Septuagint) made by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus, B.C. 270. Jeremiah, the prophet of Israel, lived two centuries before Plato, consequently any

personal interview between the two was simply impossible" ("Christianity and Greek Philosophy," p. 476).

A strange notion, indeed, that the Greeks went to Judea to learn wisdom and virtue, when the Jews were an exceedingly illiterate people, and the moral character of their best men was immeasurably inferior to that of the Grecian philosophers!

"The Bible," says Albert Barnes, "came from a land undistinguished for literature; a land not rich in classical associations; a land not distinguished for pushing its discoveries into the region of science. Chaldea had its observatories, and the dwellers there looked out on the stars and gave them names; Egypt had its temples, where the truths of science as well as the precepts of religion were committed to the sacred priesthood; Greece had academic groves, but Judea had neither. To such things the attention of the nation was never turned. We have all their literature, all their science, all their knowledge of art, and all this is in the Bible. Among the ancients they were regarded as a narrow-minded, a bigoted, a superstitious people" ("Lectures on Ev. of Christianity," pp. 257-8).

It is hardly probable that the philosophers of Greece went to such a people to get their systems of philosophy and their code of ethics.

But, even if this preposterous claim could be sustained, it would now fail to serve the advocates of Christianity; for the same moral teachings to which we have referred have been traced back to a period, compared with which the oldest of the Bible writers are unquestionably modern. The researches of the past few years in the history of ancient Egypt and ancient Judea, Chaldea, etc., have made sad havoc with the whimsical theories of old theological writers.

It is, I think, sufficiently evident from what has been said, that whatever has been the influence of Christianity, genius, moral worth, and national as well as individual greatness existed ages before it appeared, and where the Bible was never known. It follows clearly enough that civilization is not dependent upon the Christian system or the Jewish or Christian sacred scriptures. There is, therefore, no reason for the belief so frequently expressed, that the world would go back into barbarism if regard for the Bible as a work of divine origin and authority were destroyed.

III.

We will now turn our attention to the condition of the world when Christianity began its career, and up to the time that it commenced to exert a general influence in the Roman Empire. At the very outset we shall be confronted with the statement that when Christ appeared, and during the continuance of pagan influence, the moral and religious condition of the Empire was lamentable; that gladiatorial exhibitions in which men were slain for mere pleasure were common; that slavery of the most terrible form was general, and cruelty and barbarity toward the slaves was the rule; that the condition of woman was one of extreme degradation; that concubinage and prostitution prevailed everywhere; that

suicide was common; that religion was a puerile superstition which favored the looseness and licentiousness of the times; that the world was rapidly going into barbarism, and that in its condition was presented an irrefutable argument in favor of the necessity of a revelation from God to prevent the extinction of every vestige of virtue in the world.

I reply that these representations, so often made, convey to the mind unacquainted with the period to which they refer a very erroneous impression as to the state of society and the condition of the Empire under paganism.

It is true that gladiatorial exhibitions disgraced Rome in the most brilliant periods of her history. But it is neither just nor fair to allude to this aspect of Roman life as an illustration of insensibility to suffering or of want of humanity characteristic of the times. This brutalizing amusement was, it should be remembered, an *anomaly* in Roman civilization. The gladiatorial shows were originally human sacrifices performed at the tombs of the great, to appease the manes of the dead. After losing their religious significance, they were still kept up as a means of encouraging a military spirit among the people, by presenting before them frequently spectacles of courageous death. They thus became a custom, the propriety of which the people never stopped to consider, and sanctioned as they were by age, and rendered familiar to the people, they were witnessed with pleasure, when spectacles no more barbarous but unconsecrated by age would have excited their commiseration and called forth an indignant protest. Numerous illustrations might be given of the humanity of the age, in striking contrast to the apparent disregard of human suffering and of the sanctity of human life, manifested in sustaining gladiatorial combats. I will give but one: It is related that an accident having occurred at a rope-dance, in the time of Marcus Aurelius, the Emperor ordered that thereafter at such amusements a net should always be spread below the rope, to prevent the possibility of a similar accident in the future.

All civilizations have their anomalies. Up to a time within the memory of us all, in our own country, human beings were dragged up to the auction block and sold to the highest bidder. The father and mother were separated from their children, and, if the interest of the owner demanded it, from one another. Marriage among the slaves was recognized by the master only so long as it enhanced the money value of the slave. Slaves escaping into the free States were caught and returned to their masters by the authority of the national Government. The Supreme Court of the United States decided that negroes could not be citizens, and one of its most distinguished and incorruptible Chief Justices declared that "the negro has no rights that the white man is bound to respect." Christian clergymen declared that slavery was sanctioned and ordained by God, and for years the influence of the Church as well as the power of the State was exerted to sustain it, defend it, and perpetuate it in the "free" republic of America.

How glaringly inconsistent all this was with the general character of the American people, North and South alike; a people whose hearts were touched by the appeals of the Greeks, the Poles, and the Hungarians when they were struggling for freedom, and by the miseries of distressed Ireland when she was suffering from famine; whose hands have ever been open to the calls of suffering, from whatever quarter; whose generosity and thoughtful regard for the unfortunate have been demonstrated by their establishing asylums for the insane, hospitals for the sick and institutions for the poor in every State of the Union. A writer who should, two thousand years hence, endeavor to show that the people of the United States in the nineteenth century were devoid of sensibility or tenderness of heart, or regard for human rights, from the fact that slavery existed in the country and was sustained by the political and religious agencies of the times, would not take a more superficial or unjust view of the American character than does the Christian theologian of the character of the ancient Romans when he dwells on the horrors of the gladiatorial shows, and points to them as proof of the absence of regard for human life. Just as familiarity with human slavery accustomed the people of this country, especially in the Southern States, to its revolting practices, and its age, established character, and supposed necessity and usefulness blinded the most honest and conscientious minds to its real nature and influence, so familiarity with the Roman combats and their existence for ages accustomed the people to view them without those feelings of pity and indignation which such spectacles under other circumstances would have aroused.

There is another fact to which Christian writers make no allusion. In the first century, and even before it, there was a growing sentiment among the better class of society against these barbarous exhibitions. Some of the pagans denounced them as they were conducted in their time, while others, among whom Seneca and Plutarch may be mentioned, denounced the whole system in unqualified terms. While they possessed a fascination for the multitude, and were patronized by the fashionable and the great, as bull-fights have been in Spain eighteen centuries later, it is evident that they were, in spite of their time-honored character, viewed with regret by no inconsiderable portion of the Roman people.

In regard to slavery in pagan Rome, the representations of the clergy are generally based on a few extreme cases, related by Roman historians or referred to by Roman satirists, as instances of extreme cruelty. By no means do they give a correct idea of the condition or the ordinary treatment of the servile class. The fact is, the slave in pagan Rome was not necessarily the degraded being that he afterwards became under Christianity. "The physician who tended the Roman in his sickness, the tutor to whom he confided the education of his son, the artists whose works commanded the admiration of the city, were usually slaves. Slaves sometimes mixed with their masters in the family, ate habitually

with them at the same table, and were regarded by them with the warmest affection" (Lecky's "Hist. of Morals," i. 304).

Although marriage among slaves received no legal recognition, it was sanctioned by custom, and the separation of families was not common, as it was in Christian America in the nineteenth century. The Roman slave could own private property, and although by law it reverted after the death of the slave to the master, it was not uncommon for masters to permit their slaves to dispose of their property by will. By industry and good behavior a captive might hope for his liberty in about six years. The freeing of slaves was at times so common that it led to great confusion and danger. In many cases the slaves refused to accept freedom when it was offered to them, and the attachment of slaves to their masters was shown during the civil wars, when they stood by them in the most trying times, accompanied them in their flight, and exerted all their ingenuity and even sacrificed their lives to ensure the safety of their masters. Speaking of the fidelity of slaves, Lecky observes, "This was, indeed, for some time the pre-eminent virtue of Rome, and it proves conclusively that the masters were not so tyrannical, and that the slaves were not so degraded, as is sometimes alleged" ("Hist. Mor.," i. 305).

Epictetus was a slave; he was made free and was not considered unworthy the special regard and friendship of an emperor. There was, no doubt, much cruelty connected with the institution, yet ill-treatment of slaves was not the rule but the exception. According to Seneca, the master who acted unkindly to his slaves was pointed at and insulted in the streets. The application of torture to slave witnesses, we are informed, was extremely rare, and carefully guarded by legal restrictions. Even under Nero, a judge was appointed to hear the complaints of slaves, and to punish masters who treated them with cruelty or failed to furnish them with the necessaries of life. Kindness to slaves was inculcated by philosophers and moralists for centuries. Plato and Aristotle, Zeno and Epictetus, enjoined it in the most earnest language; and whole pages of Seneca are devoted to showing the duties of masters to their slaves. But enough has been said to indicate that the common representations of the defenders of Christianity regarding slavery in the Empire are quite incorrect. It is apparent, as Mr. Lecky remarks, that "the slave code of imperial Rome compares not unfavorably with those of some Christian nations" ("Hist. Morals," i. 308).

IV.

THE statements of the clergy as to the condition of woman in pagan Rome are also usually incorrect. Woman's position in the pagan Empire was one of great social dignity, and a large class enjoyed great legal independence. Woman could hold property in her own right. Inheriting a portion of her father's property, she retained it independently of her husband. No inconsiderable portion of the wealth of Rome was, at one

time, under the absolute control of women. There was hardly a more constant theme of satire than the alleged tyranny exercised by rich wives over their husbands, to whom it is said they loaned money, and not unfrequently at exorbitant rates of interest. "No Roman," says Lecky, "hesitated to lead his wife with him to the feast, or to place the mother of his children at the head of his table." Divorces, which in an earlier age were very rare, none having occurred, it was said, for 520 years, were in the Empire undoubtedly frequent; but the right to separate belonged to the wife as well as to the husband. The word concubine represented one of the forms of marriage. This union, which the clergy have frequently stated was but little better than prostitution, was strictly legal and honorable. It was contracted between men of patrician rank and freed women, who from motives of policy were not permitted to intermarry according to the other forms. But cohabitation under this form made it impossible for the man to contract a union with another woman, without being guilty of adultery.

It is hardly necessary to state that monogamy prevailed in Rome from the earliest times. Historians are agreed that Roman influence was one of the chief causes that made this type of marriage dominant in Europe. Mrs. Lydia Maria Child, alluding to a period earlier than the one of which I am speaking, says, "How far the Romans had advanced beyond the Asiatic (Bible) ideas on the subject is indicated by a remark of Cato the Censor, who lived 232 B.C. He was accustomed to say, 'They who beat their wives or children, lay sacrilegious hands on the most sacred things in the world. For myself, I prefer the character of a good husband to that of a great senator.'" The precepts of Plutarch respecting marriage are scarcely surpassed by those of any modern writer. Another fact should be mentioned: the equality of the obligation of chastity was as generally asserted as at the present day. Antoninus, in issuing a condemnation for adultery against a guilty wife by the request of the husband, added the following: "*Provided* always, it is established by your life that you gave her an example of fidelity. It would be unjust that a husband should exact a fidelity he does not himself keep."

The courtesan class in pagan Rome was large, but it was regarded just as the same class is regarded among us to-day. There was, we all know, a vast amount of licentiousness in the Empire, as there has often been in the most brilliant periods since that time, yet it is not to be denied that the Empire is crowded with examples of conjugal heroism and devotion. There was, too, much of ancient Roman simplicity. The most noble ladies worked with their own hands at woolen fabrics, and the skill of wives in domestic economy was not unfrequently mentioned in their epitaphs. The clothes which the Emperor Augustus wore were made by his own wife and sisters: "In the higher families," says Renan, "excesses in the toilet were almost unknown" ("Apostles," p. 253). The extreme degradation of woman in pagan Rome exists, indeed, only in the imagination of the Christian, who, in his anxiety to ascribe all

progress to his religion, is ready to believe there was not one luminous spot on the earth outside of Judea until the appearance of Christ.

Did space permit, we should be pleased to speak of the condition of woman among the pagan Germans. The German women were remarkable for their chastity. Adultery was very rare; polygamy was confined to the princes, and no woman known to have sinned, however great her personal charms, could secure a husband. "The old Teutonic tribes," says Mrs. Child, "had always been remarkable for the high consideration in which they held their women, and the respect with which they treated them." "Teutonic tribes married but one wife, and fully acknowledged the equality of men and women, both in matters religious and matters political." "Only," says F. W. Newman, "in countries where Germanic sentiment has taken root do we see marks of any elevation of the female sex superior to that of pagan antiquity; and as the elevation of the German woman in her deepest paganism was already striking to Tacitus and his contemporaries, it is highly unreasonable to claim it as an achievement of Christianity" ("Phases of Faith").

Many as were the evils in the pagan Empire, and atrocious as was the character of some of them, there was still a great deal on which the moralist may dwell with satisfaction. "The corruption of the surface," says Renan, "did not extend to the great mass of seriousness and honor which existed in better Roman society, and many examples are yet preserved of devotion to order, duty, peace, and solid integrity" ("Apostles," p. 253).

Provisions for the relief of poverty, the entire absence of which one would infer from the representations of Christian writers, were really abundant—indeed, so great that they became an encouragement to idleness. Under Augustus, 200,000 persons received monthly gratuitous distributions of corn. When Egypt was afflicted by famine, Trajan fed the people from other granaries of the Empire. Those times were not without their noble manifestations of sympathy and benevolence. When Chicago was reduced to ashes by the fire-fiend, the generous contributions which were sent from every quarter were, we thought, sublime demonstrations of the innate goodness and nobleness of human nature. But pagan Rome could point to noble exhibitions of sympathy, and to generous assistance rendered under similar circumstances equally entitled to our admiration.

The Emperor Trajan in his reign provided for the support of 5,000 children by the Government. In the little Italian town of Villia, the same emperor instituted a charity which partially supported 270 children. The name of one woman has been preserved—Celia Macrina—who established a charity for the children at Terracina. Several of the pagan emperors were distinguished for their bounty to poor women. They founded institutions for poor girls, infirmaries for slaves, and, some historians have claimed, public hospitals for the sick. Benefit societies, providing against casualties, by paying money monthly into a common

fund, existed in the pagan Empire, and, indeed, were not unknown in pagan Greece 400 B.C.

Expanded ideas of universal brotherhood had been increasing from the time of the conquests of Alexander, which to some extent brought into relationship the nations along the Mediterranean, which previously were unknown to one another. This sentiment was greatly advanced when the whole known world was brought under the dominion of the Roman emperors. "Independently of Christian revelation," says Merivale, "the heathen world was gravitating, through natural causes, toward the acknowledgement of the cardinal doctrines of humanity" ("Conversion of the Roman Empire," p. 118).

Roman arms had made of many nations one immense Empire. The large cities were united by great roads. A common nation and common laws for the various tribes from Spain to Jerusalem gave rise to mutual interests and intimate relationships. With a knowledge of Greek, it is said, a man could travel as far through the bays and harbors of the Mediterranean as we can to-day, with French, through the principal cities of Europe. The idea of the equality and brotherhood of man, far from being confined to the ethical teachings of a few great minds, showed itself in the commingling of different nations and races, in the legislation recognizing the conjugal and pecuniary rights of woman and limiting the authority of the father over the son, in elevating the slaves by making them freedmen, and in the general drift of the age.

V.

In matters of religion, the policy of the Empire was towards toleration. "The Romans exercised this toleration," says Mosheim, "in the amplest manner, for, though they would not allow any change to be made in the religion of the Empire, nor any new form of worship to be openly introduced, yet they granted to their citizens full liberty to observe in private the sacred rites of other nations, and of honoring foreign deities (whose worship contained nothing inconsistent with the interests and laws of the republic) with feasts, temples, consecrated groves, and the like testimonials of homage and respect" ("Eccl. Hist.," Harper's Ed., i. 16).

"Even Augustus, who had an unusually strong attachment to the national religion, and who even prohibited the spread of Egyptian rites in Italy, allowed every system to enjoy freedom in its own province. The Jews, much as they were disliked and their religion scorned, were exempted by Augustus from all observances conflicting with their conscience; and, if we may believe Josephus, went so far as to present a gift of vases to the temple at Jerusalem.

"A very natural curiosity calls us to inquire," says Mosheim, "how it happened that the Romans, who were troublesome to no nation on account of its religion, and who suffered even the Jews to live under their own laws and follow their own method of worship, treated the

Christians alone with such severity. A principal reason of the severity with which the Romans persecuted the Christians, notwithstanding these considerations, seems to have been the abhorrence and contempt felt by the latter for the religion of the Empire, which was so intimately connected with the form, and indeed with the very essence of its political constitution; for, though the Romans gave an unlimited toleration to all religions which had nothing in their tenets dangerous to the commonwealth, yet they would not permit that of their ancestors, which was established by the laws of the land, to be turned into derision, nor the people to be drawn away from their attachment to it. These, however, were the two things with which the Christians were charged, and that justly, though to their honor. They dared to *ridicule* the absurdities of the pagan superstition, and they were ardent and assiduous in gaining proselytes to the truth" ("Ecc. Hist.," i. 30).

The persecutions of the Christians by the pagans, it is now universally conceded by Christian historians, have been greatly exaggerated. Christians have killed in *one day*, for their faith, nearly half as many heretics as all the Christians put to death by the pagans during the whole period of the pagan Empire.

"We may search in vain," says Renan, "the Roman law before Constantine for a single passage against freedom of thought, and the history of the Imperial Government furnishes no instance of a prosecution for entertaining an abstract doctrine" ("Apostles," p. 259).

The teaching and example of the Stoics were not without their force and influence. "The austere purity of their lives and the heroic grandeur of their deaths kept alive the tradition of Roman liberty, even under a Nero or a Domitian." Says Lecky, "To the Stoics and the Roman lawyers is mainly due the clear recognition of the existence of a law of nature above and beyond all human enactments, which has been the basis of the best moral and most influential though most chimerical speculations of later ages, and the renewed study of Roman law was an important element in the revival that preceded the Reformation" ("Hist. Morals," i. 287).

The same writer tells us that the golden age of Rome was not Christian, but pagan. It was "in the reign of the pagan emperors, and especially of Hadrian and Alexander Severus, that nearly all the most important measures were taken redressing injustices, elevating oppressed classes, and making the doctrine of the natural equality and fraternity of mankind the basis of legal enactment. Receiving the heritage of those laws, the Christians, no doubt, added something; but a careful examination will show that it was surprisingly little" (Ib., ii. 42).

With the polythism that existed there was general dissatisfaction. Thinking minds regarded the whole system that prevailed as merely a superstition. Virgil, Seneca, Quintilian, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, all speak of God as the "Father of men" and the "Preserver of worlds." Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, and the later Platonists generally, maintain

that the special deities mean but the various powers of the one great God.

As Gibbon says, when Tertullian or Lactantius employed their labors in exposing the follies and extravagances of paganism, "they had only to transcribe the eloquence of Cicero or the wit of Lucan." Although the ministers of the established religion continued to perform the ancient rights according to the laws of their country, philosophic and reflecting minds generally, although treating them with respect on public occasions, felt only contempt for them; and the people, "from the master to the menial slave who waited at his table, and who eagerly listened to the freedom of his conversation," were filled with doubts respecting the popular faith. The established faith no longer satisfied an age in which the tendencies were towards monotheism. It is unquestionable that the unity of the Empire had helped to create a demand for a religious unity. An able writer has claimed, and justly, I think, that the deification of emperors was an unconscious effort to realize this device for a monotheistic faith. The religion of this period, although the necessity for its existence was continually urged in the professed interests of order and virtue, as that of Christianity is to-day, did very little, if anything, to restrain the ignorant and the vicious, while its old stereotyped forms and ceremonies and mythological fables were undoubtedly an obstacle to reform and advancement. This fact, together with the tendencies I have mentioned, directing the mind to one sole divinity instead of a multitude of godlings, explains in part the rapid progress of the Christian Church.

During all this time, philosophy, much as it has been sneered at by Christian theologians, from St. Paul down to the present time, was a constant protest against superstition and vice alike.

"There was as much grandeur," says Renan, "in the struggle of philosophy in the first century as in that of Christianity; but how unequal has been the recompense!" ("Apostles," p. 277). "It is thine to murder," said Helvidius Pricus to Vespasian; "it is mine to die." "You may menace me with death, but nature threatens you," said Demetrius the Cynic to Nero. But superstition triumphed over philosophy, and while religious martyrs became an object of veneration amounting to worship, the martyrs of philosophy are unhonored and forgotten.

(To be continued.)



ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

BY ALONZO LEORA RICE, RAY'S CROSSING, INDIANA.

I CANNOT yet believe that dread decree
 Of punishment eternal; that the hand
 Which fashioned us, will ever write the brand
 Of doom across our foreheads. Wide the sea,
 With jocund shouts of sailors floating free
 Across glad waters; mighty is the land,
 Where multitudes of people bind the band
 Of harvest-fields that bend for you and me.
 From ashes of the rose there is an art
 To fashion it again; and from the soul
 Whose broken urn holds but a little part
 Of life's rich incense may arise the whole
 To perfect fulness; then all life may start
 To gather beauty as long seasons roll.

BILL'S IN TROUBLE.

I've got a letter, parson, from my son away out West.
 An' my ol' heart is heavy as an anvil in my breast,
 To think the boy whose futur' I had oncé so proudly planned
 Should wander from the path o' right an' come to sich an end!

I told him when he left us, only three short years ago,
 He'd find himself a-plowing in a mighty crooked row—
 He'd miss his father's counsels, an' his mother's prayers, too,
 But he said the farm was hateful, an' he guessed he'd have to go.

I know thar's big temptation for a youngster in the West,
 But I believed our Billy had the courage to resist;
 An' when he left I warned him o' the everwaitin' snares
 That lie like hidden serpents in life's pathways everywhere.

But Bill he promised faithful to be keerful, an' allowed
 He'd build a reputation that 'd make us mighty proud;
 But it seems as how my counsel sort o' faded from his mind,
 An' now the boy's in trouble o' the very wustest kind!

His letters came so seldom that I somehow sort o' knowed
 That Billy was a-trampin' on a mighty rocky road,
 But never once imagined he would bow my head in shame,
 An' in the dust'd waller his ol' daddy's honored name.

He writes from out in Denver, an' the story's mighty short;
 I just can't tell his mother,—it'll crush her poor ol' heart!
 An' so I reckoned, parson, you might break the news to her—
 Bill's in the Legislatur',—but he doesn't say what fur.

—Anon., in *Denver Post*.

MY JOURNEY FROM FAITH TO MENTAL FREEDOM.

BY COL. R. G. INGERSOLL.

I.

LIKE the most of you, I was raised among people who knew—who were certain. They did not reason or investigate. They had no doubts. They knew that they had the truth. In their creed there was no guess—no perhaps. They had a revelation from God. They knew the beginning of things. They knew that God commenced to create one Monday morning, four thousand and four years before Christ. They knew that in the eternity back of that morning he had done nothing. They knew that it took him six days to make the earth—all plants, all animals, all life, and all the globes that wheel in space. They knew exactly what he did each day, and when he rested. They knew the origin, the cause of evil, of all crime, of all disease and death.

They not only knew the beginning, but they knew the end. They knew that life had one path and one road. They knew that the path, grass-grown and narrow, filled with thorns and nettles, infested with vipers, wet with tears, stained by bleeding feet, led to heaven; and that the road, broad and smooth, bordered with fruits and flowers, filled with laughter and song, and all the happiness of human love, led straight to hell. They knew that God was doing his best to make you take the path, and that the devil used every art to keep you in the road.

They knew that there was a perpetual battle waged between the great powers of good and evil for the possession of human souls. They knew that many centuries ago God had left his throne and had been born a babe into this poor world; that he had suffered death for the sake of man—for the sake of saving a few. They also knew that the human heart was utterly depraved, so that man by nature was in love with wrong, and hated God with all his might.

All who doubted or denied would be lost. To live a moral and honest life—to keep your contracts, to take care of wife and child—to make a happy home—to be a good citizen, a patriot, a just and thoughtful man—was simply a respectable way of going to hell.

God did not reward men for being honest, generous, and brave, but for the act of faith—without faith, all the so-called virtues were sins, and the men who practised these virtues, without faith, deserved to suffer eternal pain.

All of these comforting and reasonable things were taught by the ministers in their pulpits—by teachers in Sunday schools, and by parents at home. The children were victims. They were assaulted in the

cradle—in their mother's arms. Then, the schoolmaster carried on the war against their natural sense, and all the books they read were filled with the same impossible truths. The poor children were helpless. The atmosphere they breathed was filled with lies—lies that mingled with their blood.

In those days ministers depended on revivals to save souls and reform the world.

In the winter, navigation having closed, business was mostly suspended. There were no railways, and the only means of communication were waggons and boats. Generally the roads were so bad that the waggons were laid up with the boats. There were no operas, no theatres, no amusement except parties and balls. The parties were regarded as worldly, and the balls as wicked. For real and virtuous enjoyment the good people depended on revivals.

The sermons were mostly about the pains and agonies of hell, the joys and ecstasies of heaven, salvation by faith, and the efficacy of the atonement. The little churches in which the services were held were generally small, badly ventilated, and exceedingly warm. The emotional sermons, the sad singing, the hysterical amens, the hope of heaven, the fear of hell, caused many to lose the little sense they had. They became substantially insane. In this condition they flocked to the "mourner's bench," asked for the prayers of the faithful, had strange feelings, prayed and wept, and thought they had been "born again." Then they would tell their experience—how wicked they had been, how evil had been their thoughts, their desires, and how good they had suddenly become.

II.

They used to tell the story of an old woman who, in telling her experience, said: "Before I was converted—before I gave my heart to God—I used to lie and steal; but now, thanks to the grace and blood of Jesus Christ, I have quit 'em both, in a great measure."

Of course all the people were not exactly of one mind. There were some scoffers, and now and then some man had sense enough to laugh at the threats of the priests and make a jest of hell. Some would tell of unbelievers who had lived and died in peace.

Well, while the cold weather lasted, while the snows fell, the revival went on; but when the winter was over, when the steamboat's whistle was heard, when business started again, most of the converts "backslid" and fell again into their old ways; but the next winter they were on hand, ready to be "born again." They formed a kind of stock company, playing the same parts every winter and backsliding every spring.

The ministers who preached at these revivals were in earnest. They were zealous and sincere. They were not philosophers. To them science was the name of a vague dread—a dangerous enemy. They did not know much, but they believed a great deal. To them hell was a burning reality. They could see the smoke and flames. The Devil was no myth.

He was an actual person, a rival of God, an enemy of mankind. They thought that the important business of this life was to save your soul, that all should resist and scorn the pleasures of sense, and keep their eyes steadily fixed on the golden gate of the new Jerusalem. They were unbalanced, emotional, hysterical, bigoted, hateful, loving, and insane. They really believed the Bible to be the actual word of God, a book without mistake or contradiction. They called its cruelties justice, its absurdities mysteries, its miracles facts, and the idiotic passages were regarded as profoundly spiritual. They dwelt on the pangs, the regrets, the infinite agonies of the lost, and showed how easily they could be avoided, and how cheaply heaven could be obtained. They told their hearers to believe, to have faith; to give their hearts to God and their sins to Christ, who would bear their burdens and make their souls as white as snow.

All this the ministers really believed. They were absolutely certain. In their minds the Devil had tried in vain to sow the seeds of doubt.

I heard hundreds of these evangelical sermons, heard hundreds of the most fearful and vivid descriptions of the tortures inflicted in hell, of the horrible state of the lost. I supposed that what I heard was true, and yet I did not believe it. I said, "It is," and then I thought, "It cannot be."

These sermons made but a faint impression on my mind. I was not convinced.

I had no desire to be "converted," did not want a "new heart," and had no wish to be "born again."

But I heard one sermon that touched my heart, that left its mark, like a scar, on my brain.

One Sunday I went with my brother to hear a Free Will Baptist preacher. He was a large man, dressed like a farmer; but he was an orator. He could paint a picture with words.

He took for his text the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus." He described Dives, the rich man, his manner of life, the excesses in which he indulged, his extravagance, his riotous nights, his purple and fine linen, his feasts, his wines, and his beautiful women.

Then he described Lazarus, his poverty, his rags and wretchedness, his poor body eaten by disease, the crusts and crumbs he devoured, the dogs that pitied him. He pictured his lonely life, his friendless death.

Then, changing his tone of pity to one of triumph, leaping from tears to the heights of exultation, from defeat to victory, he described the glorious company of angels who, with white and outspread wings, carried the soul of the despised pauper to Paradise--to the bosom of Abraham.

Then, changing his voice to one of scorn and loathing, he told of the rich man's death. He was in his palace, on his costly couch, the air heavy with perfume, the room filled with servants and physicians. His gold was worthless then. He could not buy another breath. He died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.

Then, assuming a dramatic attitude, putting his right hand to his ear, he whispered: "Hark! 'Father Abraham! Father Abraham! I pray thee send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water and cool my parched tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.'

"Oh, my hearers, he has been making that request for more than eighteen hundred years. And millions of ages hence that wail will cross the gulf that lies between the saved and lost, and still will be heard the cry, 'Father Abraham! Father Abraham! I pray thee send Lazarus that he may dip his finger into water and cool my parched tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.'"

For the first time I understood the dogma of eternal pain—appreciated the "glad tidings of great joy." For the first time my imagination grasped the height and depth of the Christian horror. Then I said: "It is a lie, and I hate your religion. If it is true, I hate your God."

From that day I have had no fear, no doubt. For me, on that day the flames of hell were quenched. From that day I have passionately hated every orthodox creed.

From my childhood I had heard read, and read, the Bible. Morning and evening the sacred volume was opened, and prayers were said. The Bible was my first history, the Jews were the first people, and the events narrated by Moses and the other inspired writers, and those predicted by the prophets, were the all-important things. In other books were found the thoughts and dreams of men, but in the Bible were the sacred truths of God.

Yet, in spite of my surroundings, of my education, I had no love for God. He was so saving of mercy, so extravagant in murder, so anxious to kill, so ready to assassinate, that I hated him with all my heart. At his command babes were butchered, women violated, and the white hair of trembling age stained with blood. This God visited the people with pestilence, filled the houses and covered the streets with the dying and the dead, saw babes starving on the breasts of pailid mothers, heard the sobs, saw the tears, the sunken cheeks, the sightless eyes, the new-made graves, and remained as pitiless as the pestilence.

This God withheld the rain—caused the famine—saw the fierce eyes of hunger—the wasted forms, the white lips—saw mothers eating babes, and remained as ferocious as famine.

It seems to me impossible for a civilized man to love or worship or respect the God of the Old Testament. A really civilized man, a really civilized woman, must hold such a God in abhorrence and contempt.

But in the old days the good people justified Jehovah in his treatment of the heathen. The wretches who were murdered were idolaters, and therefore unfit to live.

According to the Bible, God had never revealed himself to these people, and he knew that without a revelation they could not know that he was the true God. Whose fault was it, then, that they were heathen?

The Christians said that God had the right to destroy them because

he had created them. What did he create them for? He knew when he made them that they would be food for the sword. He knew that he would have the pleasure of seeing them murdered.

As a last answer, as a final excuse, the worshippers of Jehovah said that all these horrible things happened under the "old dispensation" of unyielding law and absolute justice, but that now, "under the new dispensation," all had been changed; the sword of justice had been sheathed, and love enthroned. In the Old Testament, they said, God is the judge; but in the New, Christ is the merciful. As a matter of fact, the New Testament is infinitely worse than the Old. In the Old there is no threat of eternal pain. Jehovah had no eternal prison, no everlasting fire. His hatred ended at the grave. His revenge was satisfied when his enemy was dead.

In the New Testament death is not the end, but the beginning, of punishment that has no end. In the New Testament the malice of God is infinite, and the hunger of his revenge is eternal.

The orthodox God, when clothed in human flesh, told his disciples not to resist evil, to love their enemies, and, when smitten on one cheek, to turn the other; and yet we are told that this same God, with the same loving lips, uttered these heartless, these fiendish words: "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." These are the words of "eternal love."

No human being has imagination enough to conceive of this infinite horror.

III.

ALL that the human race has suffered in war and want, in pestilence and famine, in fire and flood—all the pangs and pains of every disease and every death—all this is as nothing compared with the agonies to be endured by one lost soul. This is the conclusion of the Christian religion. This is the justice of God—the mercy of Christ.

This frightful dogma, this infinite lie, made me the implacable enemy of Christianity. The truth is, that this belief in eternal pain has been the real persecutor. It founded the Inquisition, forged the chains, and furnished the fagots. It has darkened the lives of many millions. It made the cradle as terrible as the coffin. It enslaved nations and shed the blood of countless thousands. It sacrificed the wisest, the bravest, and the best. It subverted the idea of justice, drove mercy from the heart, changed men to fiends, and banished reason from the brain.

In my youth I read religious books—books about God, about the atonement, about salvation by faith, and about the other worlds. I became familiar with the commentators, with Adam Clarke, who thought that the serpent seduced our mother Eve, and was, in fact, the father of Cain. He also believed that the animals, while in the ark, had their natures changed to that degree that they devoured straw together and enjoyed each other's society, thus prefiguring the blessed millennium. I

read Scott, who was such a natural theologian that he really thought that the story of Phaeton, of the wild steeds dashing across the sky, corroborated the story of Joshua having stopped the sun and moon. So I read Henry and McNight, and found out that God so loved the world that he made up his mind to damn a large majority of the human race. I read Cruden, who made the great Concordance, and made the miracles as small and probable as he could. I remember that he explained the miracle of feeding the wandering Jews with quails by saying that even at this day immense numbers of quails crossed the Red Sea, and that sometimes, when tired, they settled on ships that sank beneath their weight. The fact that the explanation was as hard to believe as the miracle made no difference to the devout Cruden.

To while away the time I read Calvin's "Institutes," a book calculated to produce in any natural mind considerable respect for the devil.

I read Paley's "Evidences," and found that the evidence of ingenuity in producing the evil, in contriving the hurtful, was at least equal to the evidence tending to show the use of intelligence in the creation of what we call good.

You know the watch argument was Paley's greatest effort. A man finds a watch, and it is so wonderful that he concludes that it must have had a maker. He finds the maker, and he is so much more wonderful than the watch that he says he must have had a maker. Then he finds God, the maker of the man, and he is so much more wonderful than the man that he could *not* have had a maker. This is what the lawyers call a departure in pleading. According to Paley, there can be no design without a designer; but there can be a designer without a design. The wonder of the watch suggested the watchmaker, and the wonder of the watchmaker suggested the creator, and the wonder of the creator demonstrated that he was not created, but was uncaused and eternal.

We had Edwards on "The Will," in which the reverend author shows that necessity has no effect on accountability, and that when God creates a human being, and at the same time determines and decrees exactly what that being shall do and be, the human being is responsible, and God in his justice and mercy has the right to torture the soul of that human being forever. Yet Edwards said that he loved God.

The fact is, that if you believe in an infinite God, and also in eternal punishment, then you must admit that Edwards and Calvin were absolutely right. There is no escape from their conclusions if you admit their premises. They were infinitely cruel, their premises infinitely absurd, their God infinitely fiendish, and their logic perfect.

And yet I have kindness and candor enough to say that Calvin and Edwards were both insane.

We had plenty of theological literature. There was Jenkyn on "The Atonement," who demonstrated the wisdom of God in devising a way in which the suffering of innocence could justify the guilty. He tried to show that children could justly be punished for the sins of their ances-

tors, and that men could, if they had faith, be justly credited with the virtues of others. Nothing could be more devout, orthodox, and idiotic. But all of our theology was not in prose. We had Milton with his celestial militia—with his great and blundering God, his proud and cunning Devil—his wars between immortals, and all the sublime absurdities that religion wrought within the blind man's brain.

The theology taught by Milton was dear to the Puritan heart. It was accepted by New England, and it poisoned the souls and ruined the lives of thousands. Shakespeare's genius could not make the theology of Milton poetic. In the literature of the world there is nothing, outside of the "sacred books," more perfectly absurd.

IV.

We had Young's "Night Thoughts," and I supposed that the author was an exceedingly devout and loving follower of the Lord. Yet Young had a great desire to be a bishop, and, to accomplish that end, he electioneered with the king's mistress. In other words, he was a fine old hypocrite. In the "Night Thoughts," there is scarcely a genuinely honest, natural line. It is pretence from beginning to end. He did not write what he felt, but what he thought he ought to feel.

We had Pollock's "Course of Time," with its worm that never dies, its quenchless flames, its endless pangs, its leering devils, and its gloating God. This frightful poem should have been written in a madhouse. In it you find all the cries and groans and shrieks of maniacs when they tear and rend each other's flesh. It is as heartless, as hideous, as hellish as the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy.

We all know the beautiful hymn, commencing with the cheerful line: "Hark, from the tombs, a doleful sound." Nothing could have been more appropriate for children. It is well to put a coffin where it can be seen from the cradle. When a mother nurses her child, an open grave should be at her feet. This would tend to make the babe serious, reflective, religious, and miserable.

God hates laughter and despises mirth. To feel free, untrammelled, irresponsible, joyous—to forget care and death—to be flooded with sunshine without a fear of night—to forget the past, to have no thought of the future, no dream of God, or heaven or hell—to be intoxicated with the present—to be conscious only of the clasp and kiss of the one you love—this is the sin against the Holy Ghost.

But we had Cowper's poems. Cowper was sincere. He was the opposite of Young. He had an observing eye, a gentle heart, and a sense of the artistic. He sympathized with all who suffered—with the imprisoned, the enslaved, the outcast. He loved the beautiful. No wonder that the belief in eternal punishment made this loving soul insane. No wonder that the "tidings of great joy" quenched hope's great star, and left his broken heart in the dark depths of despair.

We had many volumes of orthodox sermons filled with wrath and the terrors of the judgment to come—sermons that had been delivered by savage saints.

We had the "Book of Martyrs," showing that Christians had for many centuries imitated the God they worshipped!

We had the history of the Waldenses—of the Reformation, of the Church. We had Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," Baxter's "Call," and Butler's "Analogy."

To use a Western phrase or saying, I found that Bishop Butler dug up more snakes than he killed—suggested more difficulties than he explained—more doubts than he dispelled.

Among such books my youth was passed. All the seeds of Christianity, of superstition, were sown in my mind, and cultivated with great diligence and care.

All that time I knew nothing of any science—nothing about the other side, nothing of the objections that had been urged against the blessed Scriptures, or against the perfect Congregational creed. Of course I had heard of blasphemers, of infidel wretches, of scoffers who laughed at holy things. They did not answer their arguments, but they tore their characters into shreds, and demonstrated by the fury of assertion that they had done the devil's work. And yet, in spite of all I heard, of all I read, I could not quite believe. My brain and heart said No.

For a time I left the dreams, the insanities, the illusions and delusions, the nightmares of theology. I studied astronomy, just a little—I examined maps of the heavens—learned the names of some of the constellations—of some of the stars—found something of their size, and the velocity with which they wheeled in their orbits—obtained a faint conception of astronomical spaces—found that some of the known stars were so far away in the depths of space that their light, travelling at the rate of nearly two hundred thousand miles a second, required many years to reach this little world—found that, compared with the great stars, our earth was but a grain of sand—an atom—found that the old belief, that all the hosts of heaven had been created for the benefit of man, was infinitely absurd.

I compared what was really known about the stars with the account of creation as told in Genesis. I found that the writer of the inspired book had no knowledge of astronomy—that he was as ignorant as a Choctaw chief—as an Eskimo driver of dogs. Does anyone imagine that the author of Genesis knew anything about the sun—its size? that he was acquainted with Sirius, the North Star, with Capella, or that he knew anything of the cluster of stars so far away that their light, now visiting our eyes, has been travelling for thousands, or even for millions of years?

After I had learned a little about the stars I concluded that this writer, this "inspired" scribe, had been misled by myth and legend, and that

he knew no more about creation than the average theologian of my day. In other words, that he knew absolutely nothing.

Then I studied geology—not much, just a little—just enough to find in a general way the principal facts that had been discovered, and some of the conclusions that had been reached. I learned something of the action of fire, of water, of the formation of islands and continents, of sedimentary and igneous rocks, of the coal measures, of the chalk cliffs, something about coral reefs, about the deposits made by rivers, the effect of volcanoes, of glaciers, and of the all-surrounding sea; just enough to know that the Laurentian rocks were millions of ages older than the grass beneath my feet; just enough to be certain that this world had been pursuing its flight about the sun, wheeling in light and shade, for hundreds of millions of years; just enough to know that the “inspired” writer knew nothing of the history of the earth—nothing of the great forces of nature—of wind and wave and fire—forces that have wrecked and wrought, destroyed and built, through all the countless years.

And let me tell the ministers again that they should not waste their time in answering me. They should attack the geologists. They should deny the facts that have been discovered. They should launch their curses at the blaspheming sea, and dash their heads against the infidel rocks.

Then I studied biology—not much—just enough to know something of animal forms, enough to know that life existed when the Laurentian rocks were made; just enough to know that implements of stone, implements that had been formed by human hands, had been found mingled with the bones of extinct animals, bones that had been split with these implements, and that these animals had ceased to exist hundreds of thousands of years before the manufacture of Adam and Eve.

Then I felt sure that the “inspired” record was false—that many millions of people had been deceived, and that all I had been taught about the origin of worlds and men was utterly untrue. I felt that I knew that the Old Testament was the work of ignorant men—that it was a mingling of truth and mistake, of wisdom and foolishness, of cruelty and kindness, of philosophy and absurdity—that it contained some elevated thoughts, some poetry, a good deal of the solemn and commonplace, some hysterical, some tender, some wicked prayers, some insane predictions, some delusions, some chaotic dreams.

I gave up the Old Testament on account of its mistakes, its absurdities, its ignorance, and its cruelty. I gave up the New because it vouched for the truth of the Old. I gave it up on account of its miracles, its contradictions; because Christ and his disciples believed in the existence of devils, talked and made bargains with them, and expelled them from people and animals.

This, of itself, is enough. We know, if we know anything, that devils do not exist, that Christ never cast them out, and that if he pretended to do so, he was either ignorant, dishonest or insane. These stories

about devils demonstrate the human, the ignorant origin of the New Testament. I gave up the New Testament because it rewards credulity and curses brave and honest men, and because it teaches the infinite horror of eternal pain.

Having spent my youth in reading books about religion—about the “new birth,” the disobedience of our first parents, the atonement, salvation by faith, the wickedness of pleasure, the degrading consequences of love, and the impossibility of getting to heaven by being honest and generous, and having become somewhat weary of the frayed and ravelled thoughts, you can imagine my surprise, my delight, when I read the poems of Robert Burns.

I was familiar with the writings of the devout and insincere, the pious and petrified, the pure and heartless. Here was a natural, an honest man. I knew the works of those who regarded all nature as depraved, and looked upon love as the legacy and perpetual witness of original sin. Here was a man who plucked joy from the mire, made goddesses of peasant-girls, and enthroned the honest man. One whose sympathy with loving arms, embraced all forms of suffering life, who hated slavery of every kind, who was as natural as heaven's blue, with humor kindly as an autumn day, with wit as sharp as Ithuriel's spear, and scorn that blasted like the simoom's breath. A man who loved this world, this life, the things of every day, and placed above all else the thrilling ecstasies of human love. I read and read again with rapture, tears, and smiles, feeling that a great heart was throbbing in the lines.

The religious, the lugubrious, the artificial, the spiritual poets were forgotten, or remained only as the fragments—the half-remembered horrors of monstrous and distorted dreams.

I had found at last a natural man, one who despised his country's cruel creed, and was brave and sensible enough to say: “All religions are old wives' fables, but an honest man has nothing to fear, neither in this world nor the world to come.”

I read Byron—read his “Cain,” in which, as in “Paradise Lost,” the devil seems to be the better god—read his beautiful, sublime, and bitter lines—read his “Prisoner of Chillon”—his best—a poem that filled my heart with tenderness, with pity, and with an eternal hatred of tyranny.

I read Shelley's “Queen Mab,” a poem filled with beauty, courage, thought, sympathy, tears and scorn, in which a brave soul tears down the prison walls and floods the cells with light. I read his “Skylark”—a winged flame—passionate as blood, tender as tears, pure as light.

I read Keats, “whose name was writ in water”—read “St. Agnes Eve,” a story told with such an artless art that this poor common world is changed to fairy land; the “Grecian Urn,” that fills the soul with ever-eager love, with all the rapture of imagined song; the “Nightingale,” a melody in which there is the memory of morn, a melody that dies away in dusk and tears, paining the senses with its perfectness.

And then I read Shakespeare, the plays, the sonnets, the poems—read

all. I beheld a new heaven and a new earth. Shakespeare, who knew the brain and heart of man—the hopes and fears, the loves and hatreds, the vices and the virtues of the human race; whose imagination read the tear-blurred records, the blood-stained pages of all the past, and saw, falling athwart the outspread scroll, the light of hope and love. Shakespeare, who sounded every depth, while on the loftiest peak there fell the shadow of his wings.

I compared the plays with the “inspired” books—“Romeo and Juliet” with the Song of Solomon, “Lear” with Job, and the Sonnets with the Psalms—and I found that Jehovah did not understand the art of speech. I compared Shakespeare’s women—his perfect women—with the women of the Bible. I found that Jehovah was not a sculptor, not a painter, not an artist; that he lacked the power that changes clay to flesh—the art, the plastic touch, that moulds the perfect form, the breath that gives it free and joyous life, the genius that creates the faultless. The sacred books of all the world are worthless dross and common stones compared with Shakespeare’s glittering gold and gleaming gems.

Up to this time, I had read nothing against our blessed religion except what I had found in Burns, Byron and Shelley. By some accident I read Volney, who shows that all religions are, and have been, established in the same way—that all had their christs, their apostles, their miracles and sacred books—and then asks how it is possible to decide which is the true one. A question that is still waiting for an answer.

I read Gibbon, the greatest of historians, who marshalled his facts as skillfully as Cæsar did his legions, and I learned that Christianity is only another name for Paganism—for the old religion, shorn of its beauty: that some absurdities had been exchanged for others, that some gods had been killed, a vast multitude of devils created, and that hell had been enlarged.

And then I read the “Age of Reason,” by Thomas Paine. The “Age of Reason” filled with hatred the hearts of those who loved their enemies, and the occupant of every orthodox pulpit became, and still is, a passionate maligner of Thomas Paine.

No one has answered—no one will answer—his argument against the dogma of inspiration—his objections to the Bible.

He did not rise above all the superstitions of his day. While he hated Jehovah, he praised the God of Nature, the creator and preserver of all. In this he was wrong, because, as Watson said in his reply to Paine, the God of Nature is as heartless, as cruel, as the God of the Bible.

I read Voltaire—Voltaire, the greatest man of his century, and who did more for liberty of thought and speech than any other being, human or “divine.” Voltaire, who tore the mask from hypocrisy, and found, behind the painted mask, the fangs of hate. Voltaire, who attacked the savagery of the law, the cruel decisions of venal courts, and rescued victims from the wheel and rack. Voltaire, who waged war against the tyranny of thrones, the greed and heartlessness of power. Voltaire, who

filled the flesh of priests with the barbed and poisoned arrows of his wit, and made the pious jugglers, who cursed him in public, laugh at themselves in private. Voltaire, who sided with the oppressed, rescued the unfortunate, championed the obscure and weak, civilized judges, repealed laws, and abolished torture in his native land.

I read Zeno, the man who said, centuries before our Christ was born, that man could not own his fellow man. I compared Zeno, Epicurus, and Socrates—three heathen wretches who had never heard of the Old Testament or the Ten Commandments—with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—three favorites of Jehovah—and I was depraved enough to think that the Pagans were superior to the Patriarchs, and to Jehovah himself.

My attention was turned to other religions, to the sacred books, the creeds and ceremonies of other lands—of India, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, of the dead and dying nations. I concluded that all religions had the same foundation—a belief in the supernatural—a power above nature that man could influence by worship, by sacrifice, and by prayer.

I found that all religions rested on a mistaken conception of nature; that the religion of a people was the science of that people—that is to say, their explanation of the world, of life and death, of origin and destiny.

I concluded that all religions had substantially the same origin, and that, in fact, there has never been but one religion in the world. The twigs and leaves may differ, but the trunk is the same.

The poor African that pours out his heart to his deity of stone is on an exact religious level with the robed priest who supplicates his God. The same mistake, the same superstition, bends the knees and shuts the eyes of both. Both ask for supernatural aid, and neither has the slightest thought of the absolute uniformity of nature.

Long before our Bible was known, other nations had their sacred books.

The dogmas of the Fall of Man, the Atonement, and Salvation by Faith are far older than our religion.

In our blessed Gospel—in our “divine scheme”—there is nothing new, nothing original. All old, all borrowed, pieced, and patched.

Then I concluded that all religions had been naturally produced, and that all were variations, modifications of one; then I felt that I knew that all were the work of man.

Then I asked myself the question, Is there a supernatural power—an arbitrary mind—an enthroned God—a supreme will that sways the tides and currents of the world—to which all causes bow?

I do not deny. I do not know.

Is there a God? I do not know.

Is man immortal? I do not know.

One thing I do know; and that is, that neither hope nor fear, belief nor denial, can change the fact. It is as it is, and it will be as it must be. We wait and hope.

NAPOLEON I. AS A REFORMER.

BY T. DUGAN, ALBANY, N. Y.

I HAVE had in my possession for many years "Napoleon In Exile," by Dr. O'Meara, which I never read until lately, and I find in it some extraordinary expressions from Napoleon upon religion, etc. Dr. O'Meara gives many samples of his conversation with Napoleon, which contain passages well worth repetition. Here is one on Miracles :

"Doctor," said he, "I had a nervous attack last night, which kept me continually uneasy and restless, with a severe headache, and involuntary agitations. I verily thought and hoped that a more violent attack would have taken place which would have carried me off before morning. It seemed as if a fit of apoplexy were coming on. I felt a heaviness and giddiness of my head, (as if it were overloaded with blood) with a desire to put myself in an upright posture. I felt a heat in my head, and called to those about me to pour some cold water over it, which they did not comprehend for some time. Afterwards, the water felt hot, and I thought it smelt of sulphur, though in reality it was cold." At this time he was in a free perspiration, which I recommended him to encourage, and his headache was much diminished. After I had recommended everything I thought necessary or advisable, he replied, "One would live too long." He afterwards spoke about funeral rites, and added, that when he died, he would wish that his body might be burned. "It is the best mode," said he, "as then the corpse does not produce any inconvenience ; and as to the resurrection, that must be accomplished by a miracle, and it is easy for the Being who has it in his power to perform such a miracle as bringing the remains of bodies together, also to form again the ashes of the dead." Blamed Mr. Boys' conduct, for having preached in allusion to the admiral. Said that a man's conscience was not amenable to any tribunal ; that no person ought to be accountable to any earthly power for his religious opinions.

* * *

Had a jocular conversation with him about patron saints. He asked who was my patron saint,—what was my Christian name? I replied that my first was a family name ; that I was called after Barry, Lord Avonmore, an Irish peer. "But," said he, laughing, "you must have some patron saint to befriend you, and plead your cause in the next world?" I mentioned my second Christian name. "Ah!" said he, "then *he* will plead for you. St. Napoleon ought to be very much obliged to me, and do everything in his power for me in the world to come. Poor fellow, nobody knew him before. He had not even a day in the calendar. I got him one, and persuaded the Pope to give him the fifteenth of August, my birthday. I recollect," continued he, "when I was in Italy, a priest

preaching about a poor sinner who had departed this life. His soul appeared before God, and he was required to give an account of all his actions. The evil and the good were afterwards thrown into opposite scales, in order to see which predominated. That containing the good proved much the lightest, and instantly flew up to the beam. The poor soul was condemned to the infernal regions, he was conducted by angels to the bottomless pit, delivered over to devils, and thrown into the flames. 'Already,' said the preacher, 'had the devouring element covered his feet and legs, and proceeded upwards even unto his bowels; in his vitals, oh! brethren, he felt them. He sank, and only his head appeared above the waves of fire, when he cried out to God, and afterwards to his patron saint. "Oh! patron," said he, "look down upon me! take compassion upon me, and throw into the scale of my good deeds all the lime and stone which I gave to repair the convent of ——." His saint instantly took the hint, gathered together all the lime and stone, threw them into the scale of good, which immediately preponderated; the scale of evil sprang up to the beam, and the sinner's soul into paradise at the same moment. Now you see by this, brethren, how useful it is to keep the convents in repair, for had it not been for the lime and stone bestowed by the sinner, his poor soul would even now, children, be consuming in hell fire, and yet you are so blind as to let the convent and the church, built by your forefathers, fall into ruin.' At this time," continued he, laughing, "these *canaglie* wanted to get a new convent built, and had recourse to this expedient to procure money, which, after this, poured in upon them from all quarters."

* * *

In another conversation Dr. O'Meara says :

I took the liberty of asking the Emperor his reasons for having encouraged the Jews so much. He replied : "I wanted to make them leave off usury, and become like other men. There were a great many Jews in the countries I reigned over; by removing their disabilities, and by putting them upon an equality with Catholics, Protestants, and others, I hoped to make them become good citizens, and conduct themselves like others of the community. I believe that I should have succeeded in the end. My reasoning with them was, that, as their rabbins explained to them that they ought not to practise usury to their own tribes, but were allowed to do so with Christians and others, therefore, as I had restored them to all their privileges, and made them equal to my other subjects, they must consider me to be the head of their nation, like Solomon or Herod, and my subjects as brethren of a tribe similar to theirs. That, consequently, they were not permitted to practise usury with me or them, but to treat us as if we were of the tribes of Judah. That, having similar privileges to my other subjects, they were in like manner to pay taxes, and submit to the laws of conscription and

others. By this I gained many soldiers. Besides, I should have drawn great wealth to France, as the Jews are very numerous, and would have flocked to a country where they enjoyed such superior privileges. Moreover, I wanted to establish universal liberty of conscience. My system was to have no predominant religion, but to allow perfect liberty of conscience and of thought, to make all men equal, whether Protestants, Catholics, Mohammedans, Deists, or others; so that their religion should have no influence in getting them employment under government. In fact, that it should neither be the means of serving or of injuring them; and that no objection should be made to a man's getting a situation on the score of religion provided he were fit for it in other respects. I made everything independent of religion. All the tribunals were so. Marriages were independent of the priests; even the burying grounds were not left at their disposal, as they could not refuse interment to the body of any person, of whatever religion. My intention was to render everything belonging to the state and the constitution purely civil and independent of any religion. I wished to deprive the priests of all influence and power in civil affairs; and to oblige them to confine themselves to their own spiritual matters, and meddle with nothing else." I asked if uncles and neices had not a right to marry in France; he replied, "Yes; but they must obtain a special permission." I asked if the permission were to be granted by the Pope. "By the Pope?" said he; "no," catching me by the ear, and smiling, "I tell you that neither the Pope nor any of the priests had power to grant anything;—by the sovereign."

I then asked if he ever would have permitted the re-establishment of the Jesuits in France. "Never," said he, "it is the most dangerous of societies, and has done more mischief than all the others. Their doctrine is, that their general is the sovereign of sovereigns, and master of the world; that all orders from him, however contrary to the laws, or however wicked, must be obeyed. Every act, however atrocious, committed by them pursuant to orders from their general at Rome becomes in their eyes meritorious. No, no, I would never have allowed a society to exist in my dominions, under the orders of a foreign general at Rome. In fact, I would not allow any *frati* (friars). There were enough of priests for those who wanted them, without having monasteries filled with *canaglie*, who did nothing but gormandize, pray, and commit crimes."



SONG OF THE AGES.*

THE most casual reader of Mr. O'Byrne's very handsome and charming volume cannot fail to perceive that he has before him the work of a highly-cultured scholar and an exceptionally gifted poet. Mr. O'Byrne's lines can be read easily—they bear scanning as will the verses of very few poets in these days of hurry and drive and slipshod work. And if the measure the author has adopted in his "Song" sometimes seems a trifle heavy, the reader is amply repaid by the veritable gold-mine of words which he finds—the shaft of which, however, has been driven a little too deep occasionally to be satisfactory to the general reader, as in the lines in the Prelude—

"Come, Lesbia, turn thine eyes on me, with me defy the blind
Chance universe revealed to sense but not revealed to mind.

Our love is real. Holding thee, I care not if the world,
The cinder-heap of *æteric* Chance, be into chaos hurled."

Such instances, however, are few, and may be condoned for the sake of the real beauty of the poems.

"The Song of the Ages" is, the author says in his preface, an attempt to "vindicate the ways of God to Man," but our readers need not be deterred from taking up the book by such a phrase. Mr. O'Byrne does not confine his invocations to any one god, and the Olympian deities have no reason to complain of any neglect. The "Song" is in two books—I., The Stone Age; II., The Bronze Age; and in these two books the author does his best to solve "the problem of the ages." If he has not succeeded in this any better than many others, we can only say that it is on account, not of a want of true poetic and imaginative power, but of the inherent insolubility of the problem. We would like to transfer many of Mr. O'Byrne's stanzas to our pages, but must be content with giving one or two as samples. Readers of "Upon This Rock" will remember Mr. O'Byrne's fine poem "England," and this stanza will recall its sentiment:

"I love thee, Ocean, for thou art the bed
Whereon from youth to age my sires have slept
Lulled by thy melodies, and Freedom's head
Is pillowed on thy bosom; thou hast kept
Her home inviolate, the sea-girt isle
Whose hills are altars where her sacred flame
Burns brightly, and shall wax in splendour while
Its jealous wardens, mindful of the fame
Of those who in the days of old were nourished on thy breast,
Shall brook no rival on the wave, the realm they love the best."

*SONG OF THE AGES. A Theodicy. By M. C. O'Byrne, Barrister-at-law, Illinois. Published by the Author. Heavy paper, red lines, bound in white and gold. \$1.00, post free. DOMINION REVIEW office, Toronto.

A beautifully engraved frontispiece illustrates this stanza :

"He comes not back : O breaking heart be still !
While time endures woman shall endure
The grief that knows no anodyne until
Death's soothing fingers work the perfect cure.
Unhappy Dido ! in that white-cliffed isle,

Whereto thy subjects ply the laboring oar,
A fairer Helen than the one whose smile
Beguiled the faithless Dardan shall deplore

In coming years the cruel fate that leaves the rustic free
To live and love while princes bear a burthen none may see."

Which is succeeded by these beautiful lines, forming the only break in the measure of the "song":

"CARMEN MORTALE.

"Warrior ! sheathe thy dinted sword,
Lay thy buckler down.
'Gainst the fierce invading horde
Thou thy blood hast freely poured,—
Claim the victor's crown !
Cross thy hands upon thy breast,
Shut thine eyes and take thy rest !

"Pilot ! strike thy tattered sail,
Make thy moorings fast.
Nor rocks to lee nor gulf nor gale
Shall cause thy rugged cheek to pale,
Now thy voyage is past.
Safe upon the eternal shore,
Time and tide shall vex no more !

"Mother ! lay that golden head
Gently on its bier.
Could thy grief recall the dead,
Would'st thou venture then to shed
One disturbing tear ?
Weep not for the lambs that dwell
In the meads of asphodel !

"Maiden ! twine thy wreath anew :
Lo ! the orange bloom
Wilting frost hath fingered, rue,
Cypress, and the poisoned yew
Best besem the tomb.
Dream not of thy lover's vows,
Death hath claimed thee for his spouse !"

Among the miscellaneous poems which fill up the volume, we are pleased to see one in memory of the late R. A. Proctor. We are glad to know that nearly the whole of the first edition of Mr. O'Byrne's book has been sold out ; and we hope a second edition may be issued, in which some printer's blemishes may be removed, as well as those we have referred to.

SCEPTICISM IN THE PULPIT.

BY PROF. GOLDWIN SMITH, IN N.Y. "SUN."

ONE eminent clergyman denies the infallibility of the Bible, and treats the Church as an association for general improvement. A second finds in the Bible inaccuracy and worse. A third professes to believe only so much of the Bible as commends itself to his judgment. Mr. Willoughby, in his interesting letter to the *Sun*, rebukes one of them for indiscretion in the publication of truth. At the same time, he says himself that the truth may be rightly told in private conversation. For his own part, he regards church-going as "a moral tonic and a mental bath;" adding, that "it is often not comfortable to get up and take a sponge bath with cold water in a cold room, but lacking better facilities you must do it if you would be decent among your friends and agreeable to yourself."

The eminent clergymen might perhaps be justified in retorting on Mr. Willoughby the charge of indiscreet disclosure. How many churchgoers are there to whom churchgoing is merely a moral and mental sponge-bath, which they take without any definite belief in the doctrine, that they may be decent among their friends and agreeable to themselves? How many are there who, dissembling in public, tell the truth in private conversation? If the number is large, the end cannot be far off, and this hollow crust of outward conformity may presently fall in with a crash all the greater for delay.

Mr. Willoughby is a layman, and has only to sit passive in his pew. But a clergyman has actively to profess and preach the doctrines. If he has ceased to believe them, what is he to do? I never could regard without entire aversion the theory of Renan, which, I fear, was also that of Matthew Arnold, that truth was the privilege of the enlightened few, while tradition was the lot of the crowd. But the most fatal part of the arrangement was, that it dedicated the clergy to falsehood.

Caution and tenderness are most necessary in dealing with religious questions, seeing to how great an extent religion has formed the basis of morality. But scepticism has now spread so far, not only among the learned, but among mechanics, that the policy of silence or dissimulation, supposing it were sound, is no longer possible. There is nothing for it now but perfectly free inquiry and frank acceptance of results. Caution and tenderness will always be in order, but they are not incompatible with sincerity.

What is the consequence of silence or dissimulation on the part of earnest and reverent inquirers? It is the abandonment of free inquiry to reckless and profane hands, with such results as the "Comic Life of Christ," which I picked up in an anti-clerical book-store in Paris. I heard Mr. Ingersoll lecture on Genesis. He was very brilliant and highly effective, but he destroyed reverence as well as superstition.

"Do not pull down, but build up," is the cry. How can we build upon a site encumbered with false tradition? All truth, negative as well as positive, is constructive; no falsehood is. I see Henry Newman preferred to his brother Francis on the ground that Henry was organic and Francis was not. What did Henry build? A house of mediæval dreams, in which he could not force himself to believe without the help of such an apparatus of self-mystification as the "Grammar of Assent," and which will only enhance scepticism by its inevitable fall. Francis Newman, if he did nothing else, cleared the ground for construction, and he helped to lay firmly the foundation of all genuine faith—thoroughgoing confidence in the Author of Truth.

The three eminent clergymen, it is to be feared, are sliding down a slippery incline, on which no permanent foothold is to be found.

STORIES OF WIG AND GOWN.

VERY long and brilliant is the list of wit conflicts between bench and bar, most of the best efforts being too well known to bear repetition. A few comparatively new ones—new in the sense of not having been told recently—are chronicled by the *London Church Family Newspaper*, and quoted in Dr. Flower's new Boston monthly, the *Family Messenger*.

Who does not remember the story of Lord Mansfield and the nervous counsel who opened with, "My unfortunate client, my lord, my unfortunate client." "Go on, my brother," said the judge, "so far the Court is entirely with you."

The story of the judge, the counsel, and the braying donkey is generally told wrongly, only the *tu quoque* being given. Here is the correct version: The late Chief Baron Kelly, when a young barrister, was pleading in a court when a donkey outside set up a loud bray. "One at a time, Brother Kelly, one at a time!" said the judge, benignly. A few minutes later the judge was summing up, when the donkey began braying again. "Pardon me, m'lud," said Kelly, "but would your ludship kindly speak a little louder, there is such an echo in the court!"

On one occasion Lord Clare, an Irish judge, was observed to be caressing a Newfoundland dog while the famous J. P. Curran was pleading before him. Counsel stopped in the midst of his argument, and on the judge motioning him to proceed, said, "I beg ten thousand pardons. I thought your lordship was in consultation."

Lord Clare once said that, if one of Curran's positions were sound, he would go home and burn his law books. "Better read them, my lord," was the retort.

Curran was once engaged in a legal argument, and behind him stood his colleague, a gentleman whose person was remarkably tall and slender, and who had

originally designed to take orders. The judge having observed that the case involved a question of ecclesiastical law, Curran said, "I can refer your lordship to a high authority behind me, who was once intended for the church; though (in a whisper to a friend beside him), in my opinion, he was fitter for the steeple."

Lord Norbury, an Irish judge, was once asked to contribute a shilling to bury an attorney. "Only a shilling to bury an attorney!" he said, "here's a guinea, go and bury one-and-twenty of them."

During the trial of the Irish rebels, among whom was Emmet, Norbury gained the *sobriquet* of "the Hanging Judge," from the celerity with which he tried and condemned prisoners to be hanged. When told he was going on swimmingly, he replied, "Yes, seven knots an hour."

Curran made this reputation of Norbury for judicial severity the occasion of a famous pun. One day, at dinner, the judge said to Curran that, if that was hung beef before him, he would try it; to which the witty advocate replied: "If you try it, my lord, it is sure to be hung."

When Lord Brougham was elevated to the woolsack, Daniel O'Connell said of him, "If Brougham knew a little law, he would know a little of everything."

The famous Erskine once began a speech before the Scotch Judge, Lord Kames, with, "Tickle, my client, the defendant, my lord." The judge interrupted him with, "Tickle him yourself, Harry; you are as able to do it as I am."

When Sir Fletcher Norton, who was noted for his want of courtesy, said in a case before the Chief Justice, "My lord, I can illustrate the point in my own person: I myself have two little manors," Lord Mansfield interrupted him with, "We all know that, Sir Fletcher."

NIGHTFALL.

I LOVE the purpling shadows on the hills
 Against the crimson sky and earliest star,
 The songs of peasants coming from afar,
 As happy as the songs of woodland rills.
 I love the last rose blush upon the lake,
 When the sun pauses in the glowing West,
 And of the earth a last kiss seems to take
 Ere he depart and leave the twilight blest.
 All these fair sights I love; yet far away
 I live from this dear calm, in noisy streets,
 Where one can only dream the close of day,
 Nor taste of Nature's health-restoring sweets.
 Yet we are wont to call sweet Freedom ours—
 So used to chains, we know not half our powers.

WM. O. PARTRIDGE.