VOLTAIRE

A PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY, VOLUME 06

Voltaire
A Philosophical Dictionary, Volume 06

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25560852
A Philosophical Dictionary, Volume 06:

Содержание

Voltaire
A Philosophical Dictionary, Volume 06

HAPPY – HAPPILY

What is called happiness is an abstract idea, composed of various ideas of pleasure; for he who has but a moment of pleasure is not a happy man, in like manner that a moment of grief constitutes not a miserable one. Pleasure is more transient than happiness, and happiness than felicity. When a person says – I am happy at this moment, he abuses the word, and only means I am pleased. When pleasure is continuous, he may then call himself happy. When this happiness lasts a little longer, it is a state of felicity. We are sometimes very far from being happy in prosperity, just as a surfeited invalid eats nothing of a great feast prepared for him.

The ancient adage, "No person should be called happy before his death," seems to turn on very false principles, if we mean by this maxim that we should not give the name of happy to a man who had been so constantly from his birth to his last hour. This continuity of agreeable moments is rendered impossible by the constitution of our organs, by that of the elements on which

we depend, and by that of mankind, on whom we depend still more. Constant happiness is the philosopher's stone of the soul; it is a great deal for us not to be a long time unhappy. A person whom we might suppose to have always enjoyed a happy life, who perishes miserably, would certainly merit the appellation of happy until his death, and we might boldly pronounce that he had been the happiest of men. Socrates might have been the happiest of the Greeks, although superstitious, absurd, or iniquitous judges, or all together, juridically poisoned him at the age of seventy years, on the suspicion that he believed in only one God.

The philosophical maxim so much agitated, "*Nemo ante obitum felix*," therefore, appears absolutely false in every sense; and if it signifies that a happy man may die an unhappy death, it signifies nothing of consequence.

The proverb of being "Happy as a king" is still more false. Everybody knows how the vulgar deceive themselves.

It is asked, if one condition is happier than another; if man in general is happier than woman. It would be necessary to have tried all conditions, to have been man and woman like Tiresias and Iphis, to decide this question; still more would it be necessary to have lived in all conditions, with a mind equally proper to each; and we must have passed through all the possible states of man and woman to judge of it.

It is further queried, if of two men one is happier than the other. It is very clear that he who has the gout and stone,

who loses his fortune, his honor, his wife and children, and who is condemned to be hanged immediately after having been mangled, is less happy in this world in everything than a young, vigorous sultan, or La Fontaine's cobbler.

But we wish to know which is the happier of two men equally healthy, equally rich, and of an equal condition. It is clear that it is their temper which decides it. The most moderate, the least anxious, and at the same time the most sensible, is the most happy; but unfortunately the most sensible is often the least moderate. It is not our condition, it is the temper of our souls which renders us happy. This disposition of our souls depends on our organs, and our organs have been arranged without our having the least part in the arrangement.

It belongs to the reader to make his reflections on the above. There are many articles on which he can say more than we ought to tell him. In matters of art, it is necessary to instruct him; in affairs of morals, he should be left to think for himself.

There are dogs whom we caress, comb, and feed with biscuits, and whom we give to pretty females: there are others which are covered with the mange, which die of hunger; others which we chase and beat, and which a young surgeon slowly dissects, after having driven four great nails into their paws. Has it depended upon these poor dogs to be happy or unhappy?

We say a happy thought, a happy feature, a happy repartee, a happy physiognomy, happy climate, etc. These thoughts, these happy traits, which strike like sudden inspirations, and which are

called the happy sallies of a man of wit, strike like flashes of light across our eyes, without our seeking it. They are no more in our power than a happy physiognomy; that is to say, a sweet and noble aspect, so independent of us, and so often deceitful. The happy climate is that which nature favors: so are happy imaginations, so is happy genius, or great talent. And who can give himself genius? or who, when he has received some ray of this flame, can preserve it always brilliant?

When we speak of a happy rascal, by this word we only comprehend his success. "Felix Sulla" – the fortunate Sulla, and Alexander VI., a duke of Borgia, have happily pillaged, betrayed, poisoned, ravaged, and assassinated. But being villains, it is very likely that they were very unhappy, even when not in fear of persons resembling themselves.

It may happen to an ill-disposed person, badly educated – a Turk, for example, of whom it ought to be said, that he is permitted to doubt the Christian faith – to put a silken cord round the necks of his viziers, when they are rich; to strangle, massacre, or throw his brothers into the Black Sea, and to ravage a hundred leagues of country for his glory. It may happen, I say, that this man has no more remorse than his mufti, and is very happy – on all which the reader may duly ponder.

There were formerly happy planets, and others unhappy, or unfortunate; unhappily, they no longer exist. Some people would have deprived the public of this useful Dictionary – happily, they have not succeeded.

Ungenerous minds, and absurd fanatics, every day endeavor to prejudice the powerful and the ignorant against philosophers. If they were unhappily listened to, we should fall back into the barbarity from which philosophers alone have withdrawn us.

HEAVEN (CIEL MATÉRIEL)

The laws of optics, which are founded upon the nature of things, have ordained that, from this small globe of earth on which we live, we shall always see the material heaven as if we were the centre of it, although we are far from being that centre; that we shall always see it as a vaulted roof, hanging over a plane, although there is no other vaulted roof than that of our atmosphere, which has no such plane; that our sun and moon will always appear one-third larger at the horizon than at their zenith, although they are nearer the spectator at the zenith than at the horizon.

Such are the laws of optics, such is the structure of your eyes, that, in the first place, the material heaven, the clouds, the moon, the sun, which is at so vast a distance from you; the planets, which in their apogee are still at a greater distance from it; all the stars placed at distances yet vastly greater, comets and meteors, everything, must appear to us in that vaulted roof as consisting of our atmosphere.

The sun appears to us, when in its zenith, smaller than when at fifteen degrees below; at thirty degrees below the zenith it will appear still larger than at fifteen; and finally, at the horizon, its size will seem larger yet; so that its dimensions in the lower heaven decrease in consequence of its elevations, in the following proportions:

	At the horizon	100
	At fifteen degrees above	68
	At thirty degrees	50
	At forty-five degrees	40

Its apparent magnitudes in the vaulted roof are as its apparent elevations; and it is the same with the moon, and with a comet.

It is not habit, it is not the intervention of tracts of land, it is not the refraction of the atmosphere which produces this effect. Malebranche and Régis have disputed with each other on this subject; but Robert Smith has calculated.

Observe the two stars, which, being at a prodigious distance from each other, and at very different depths, in the immensity of space, are here considered as placed in the circle which the sun appears to traverse. You perceive them distant from each other in the great circle, but approximating to each other in every circle smaller, or within that described by the path of the sun.

It is in this manner that you see the material heaven. It is by these invariable laws of optics that you perceive the planets sometimes retrograde and sometimes stationary; there is in fact nothing of the kind. Were you stationed in the sun, we should perceive all the planets and comets moving regularly round it in those elliptical orbits which God assigns. But we are upon the planet of the earth, in a corner of the universe, where it is impossible for us to enjoy the sight of everything.

Let us not then blame the errors of our senses, like Malebranche; the steady laws of nature originating in the immutable will of the Almighty, and adapted to the structure of our organs, cannot be errors.

We can see only the appearances of things, and not things themselves. We are no more deceived when the sun, the work of the divinity – that star a million times larger than our earth – appears to us quite flat and two feet in width, than when, in a convex mirror, which is the work of our own hands, we see a man only a few inches high.

If the Chaldæan magi were the first who employed the understanding which God bestowed upon them, to measure and arrange in their respective stations the heavenly bodies, other nations more gross and unintelligent made no advance towards imitating them.

These childish and savage populations imagined the earth to be flat, supported, I know not how, by its own weight in the air; the sun, moon, and stars to move continually upon a solid vaulted roof called a firmament; and this roof to sustain waters, and have flood-gates at regular distances, through which these waters issued to moisten and fertilize the earth.

But how did the sun, the moon, and all the stars reappear after their setting? Of this they know nothing at all. The heaven touched the flat earth: and there were no means by which the sun, moon, and stars could turn under the earth, and go to rise in the east after having set in the west. It is true that these children of

ignorance were right by chance in not entertaining the idea that the sun and fixed stars moved, round the earth. But they were far from conceiving that the sun was immovable, and the earth with its satellite revolving round him in space together with the other planets. Their fables were more distant from the true system of the world than darkness from light.

They thought that the sun and stars returned by certain unknown roads after having refreshed themselves for their course at some spot, not precisely ascertained, in the Mediterranean Sea. This was the amount of astronomy, even in the time of Homer, who is comparatively recent; for the Chaldæans kept their science to themselves, in order to obtain thereby, greater respect from other nations. Homer says, more than once, that the sun plunges into the ocean – and this ocean, be it observed, is nothing but the Nile – here, by the freshness of the waters, he repairs during the night the fatigue and exhaustion of the day, after which, he goes to the place of his regular rising by ways unknown to mortals. This idea is very like that of Baron Fœneste, who says, that the cause of our not seeing the sun when he goes back, is that he goes back by night.

As, at that time, the nations of Syria and the Greeks were somewhat acquainted with Asia and a small part of Europe, and had no notion of the countries which lie to the north of the Euxine Sea and to the south of the Nile, they laid it down as a certainty that the earth was a full third longer than it was wide; consequently the heaven, which touched the earth and embraced

it, was also longer than it was wide. Hence came down to us degrees of longitude and latitude, names which we have always retained, although with far more correct ideas than those which originally suggested them.

The Book of Job, composed by an ancient Arab who possessed some knowledge of astronomy, since he speaks of the constellations, contains nevertheless the following passage: "Where wert thou, when I laid the foundation of the earth? Who hath taken the dimensions thereof? On what are its foundations fixed? Who hath laid the cornerstone thereof?"

The least informed schoolboy, at the present day, would tell him, in answer: "The earth has neither cornerstone nor foundation; and, as to its dimensions, we know them perfectly well, as from Magellan to Bougainville, various navigators have sailed round it."

The same schoolboy would put to silence the pompous declaimer Lactantius, and all those who before and since his time have decided that the earth was fixed upon the water, and that there can be no heaven under the earth; and that, consequently, it is both ridiculous and impious to suppose the existence of antipodes.

It is curious to observe with what disdain, with what contemptuous pity, Lactantius looks down upon all the philosophers, who, from about four hundred years before his time, had begun to be acquainted with the apparent revolutions of the sun and planets, with the roundness of the earth, and

the liquid and yielding nature of the heaven through which the planets revolved in their orbits, etc. He inquires, "by what degrees philosophers attained such excess of folly as to conceive the earth to be a globe, and to surround that globe with heaven." These reasonings are upon a par with those he has adduced on the subject of the sibyls.

Our young scholar would address some such language as this to all these consequential doctors: "You are to learn that there are no such things as solid heavens placed one over another, as you have been told; that there are no real circles in which the stars move on a pretended firmament; that the sun is the centre of our planetary world; and that the earth and the planets move round it in space, in orbits not circular but elliptical. You must learn that there is, in fact, neither above nor below, but that the planets and the comets tend all towards the sun, their common centre, and that the sun tends towards them, according to an eternal law of gravitation."

Lactantius and his gabbling associates would be perfectly astonished, were the true system of the world thus unfolded to them.

HEAVEN OF THE ANCIENTS

Were a silkworm to denominate the small quantity of downy substance surrounding its ball, heaven, it would reason just as correctly as all the ancients, when they applied that term to the atmosphere; which, as M. de Fontenelle has well observed in his "Plurality of Worlds," is the down of our ball.

The vapors which rise from our seas and land, and which form the clouds, meteors, and thunder, were supposed, in the early ages of the world, to be the residence of gods. Homer always makes the gods descend in clouds of gold; and hence painters still represent them seated on a cloud. How can any one be seated on water? It was perfectly correct to place the master of the gods more at ease than the rest; he had an eagle to carry him, because the eagle soars higher than the other birds.

The ancient Greeks, observing that the lords of cities resided in citadels on the tops of mountains, supposed that the gods might also have their citadel, and placed it in Thessaly, on Mount Olympus, whose summit is sometimes hidden in clouds; so that their palace was on the same floor with their heaven.

Afterwards, the stars and planets, which appear fixed to the blue vault of our atmosphere, became the abodes of gods; seven of them had each a planet, and the rest found a lodging where they could. The general council of gods was held in a spacious hall which lay beyond the Milky Way; for it was but reasonable

that the gods should have a hall in the air, as men had town-halls and courts of assembly upon earth.

When the Titans, a species of animal between gods and men, declared their just and necessary war against these same gods in order to recover a part of their patrimony, by the father's side, as they were the sons of heaven and earth; they contented themselves with piling two or three mountains upon one another, thinking that would be quite enough to make them masters of heaven, and of the castle of Olympus.

Neve foret terris securior arduus æther,
Affectasse ferunt regnum celeste gigantes;
Attaque congestos struxisse ad sidera montes.

– OVID'S Metamorph., i. 151-153.

Nor heaven itself was more secure than earth;
Against the gods the Titans levied wars,
And piled up mountains till they reached the stars.

It is, however, more than six hundred leagues from these stars to Mount Olympus, and from some stars infinitely farther.

Virgil (Eclogue v, 57) does not hesitate to say: "*Sub pedibusque videt nubes et sidera Daphnis.*"

Daphnis, the guest of heaven, with wondering eyes,
Views in the Milky Way, the Starry skies,
And far beneath him, from the shining sphere

Beholds the morning clouds, and rolling year.

– DRYDEN.

But where then could Daphnis possibly place himself?

At the opera, and in more serious productions, the gods are introduced descending in the midst of tempests, clouds, and thunder; that is, God is brought forward in the midst of the vapors of our petty globe. These notions are so suitable to our weak minds, that they appear to us grand and sublime.

This philosophy of children and old women was of prodigious antiquity; it is believed, however, that the Chaldæans entertained nearly as correct ideas as ourselves on the subject of what is called heaven. They placed the sun in the midst of our planetary system, nearly at the same distance from our globe as our calculation computes it; and they supposed the earth and some planets to revolve round that star; this we learn from Aristarchus of Samos. It is nearly the system of the world since established by Copernicus: but the philosophers kept the secret to themselves, in order to obtain greater respect both from kings and people, or rather perhaps, to avoid the danger of persecution.

The language of error is so familiar to mankind that we still apply the name of heaven to our vapors, and the space between the earth and moon. We use the expression of ascending to heaven, just as we say the sun turns round, although we well know that it does not. We are, probably, the heaven of the inhabitants of the moon; and every planet places its heaven in that planet

nearest to itself.

Had Homer been asked, to what heaven the soul of Sarpedon had fled, or where that of Hercules resided, Homer would have been a good deal embarrassed, and would have answered by some harmonious verses.

What assurance could there be, that the ethereal soul of Hercules would be more at its ease in the planet Venus or in Saturn, than upon our own globe? Could its mansion be in the sun? In that flaming and consuming furnace, it would appear difficult for it to endure its station. In short, what was it that the ancients meant by heaven? They knew nothing about it; they were always exclaiming, "Heaven and earth," thus placing completely different things in most absurd connection. It would be just as judicious to exclaim, and connect in the same manner, infinity and an atom. Properly speaking, there is no heaven. There are a prodigious number of globes revolving in the immensity of space, and our globe revolves like the rest.

The ancients thought that to go to heaven was to ascend; but there is no ascent from one globe to another. The heavenly bodies are sometimes above our horizon, and sometimes below it. Thus, let us suppose that Venus, after visiting Paphos, should return to her own planet, when that planet had set; the goddess would not in that case ascend, in reference to our horizon; she would descend, and the proper expression would be then, descended to heaven. But the ancients did not discriminate with such nicety; on every subject of natural philosophy, their notions were vague, uncertain

and contradictory. Volumes have been composed in order to ascertain and point out what they thought upon many questions of this description. Six words would have been sufficient – "they did not think at all." We must always except a small number of sages; but they appeared at too late a period, and but rarely disclosed their thoughts; and when they did so, the charlatans in power took care to send them to heaven by the shortest way.

A writer, if I am not mistaken, of the name of Pluche, has been recently exhibiting Moses as a great natural philosopher; another had previously harmonized Moses with Descartes, and published a book, which he called, "*Carlesius Mosaisans*"; according to him, Moses was the real inventor of "Vortices," and the subtile matter; but we full well know, that when God made Moses a great legislator and prophet, it was no part of His scheme to make him also a professor of physics. Moses instructed the Jews in their duty, and did not teach them a single word of philosophy. Calmet, who compiled a great deal, but never reasoned at all, talks of the system of the Hebrews; but that stupid people never had any system. They had not even a school of geometry; the very name was utterly unknown to them. The whole of their science was comprised in money-changing and usury.

We find in their books ideas on the structure of heaven, confused, incoherent, and in every respect worthy of a people immersed in barbarism. Their first heaven was the air, the second the firmament in which the stars were fixed. This firmament

was solid and made of glass, and supported the superior waters which issued from the vast reservoirs by flood-gates, sluices, and cataracts, at the time of the deluge.

Above the firmament or these superior waters was the third heaven, or the empyream, to which St. Paul was caught up. The firmament was a sort of demi-vault which came close down to the earth.

It is clear that, according to this opinion, there could be no antipodes. Accordingly, St. Augustine treats the idea of antipodes as an absurdity; and Lactantius, whom we have already quoted, expressly says "can there possibly be any persons so simple as to believe that there are men whose heads are lower than their feet?" etc.

St. Chrysostom exclaims, in his fourteenth homily, "Where are they who pretend that the heavens are movable, and that their form is circular?"

Lactantius, once more, says, in the third book of his "Institutions," "I could prove to you by many arguments that it is impossible heaven should surround the earth."

The author of the "Spectacle of Nature" may repeat to M. le Chevalier as often as he pleases, that Lactantius and St. Chrysostom are great philosophers. He will be told in reply that they were great saints; and that to be a great saint, it is not at all necessary to be a great astronomer. It will be believed that they are in heaven, although it will be admitted to be impossible to say precisely in what part of it.

HELL

Infernum, subterranean; the regions below, or the infernal regions. Nations which buried the dead placed them in the inferior or infernal regions. Their soul, then, was with them in those regions. Such were the first physics and the first metaphysics of the Egyptians and Greeks.

The Indians, who were far more ancient, who had invented the ingenious doctrine of the metempsychosis, never believed that souls existed in the infernal regions.

The Japanese, Coreans, Chinese, and the inhabitants of the vast territory of eastern and western Tartary never knew a word of the philosophy of the infernal regions.

The Greeks, in the course of time, constituted an immense kingdom of these infernal regions, which they liberally conferred on Pluto and his wife Proserpine. They assigned them three privy counsellors, three housekeepers called Furies, and three Fates to spin, wind, and cut the thread of human life. And, as in ancient times, every hero had his dog to guard his gate, so was Pluto attended and guarded by an immense dog with three heads; for everything, it seems, was to be done by threes. Of the three privy counsellors, Minos, Æacus, and Rhadamanthus, one judged Greece, another Asia Minor – for the Greeks were then unacquainted with the Greater Asia – and the third was for Europe.

The poets, having invented these infernal regions, or hell, were the first to laugh at them. Sometimes Virgil mentions hell in the "Æneid" in a style of seriousness, because that style was then suitable to his subject. Sometimes he speaks of it with contempt in his "Georgics" (ii. 490, etc.).

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas
Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari!

Happy the man whose vigorous soul can pierce
Through the formation of this universe,
Who nobly dares despise, with soul sedate,
The den of Acheron, and vulgar fears and fate.

– WHARTON.

The following lines from the "Troad" (chorus of act ii.), in which Pluto, Cerberus, Phlegethon, Styx, etc., are treated like dreams and childish tales, were repeated in the theatre of Rome, and applauded by forty thousand hands:

… Tœnara et aspero
Regnum sub domino, limen et obsidens
Custos non facili Cerberus ostio
Rumores vacui, verbaque inania,
Et par solicito fabula somnio.

Lucretius and Horace express themselves equally strongly.

Cicero and Seneca used similar language in innumerable parts of their writings. The great emperor Marcus Aurelius reasons still more philosophically than those I have mentioned. "He who fears death, fears either to be deprived of all senses, or to experience other sensations. But, if you no longer retain your own senses, you will be no longer subject to any pain or grief. If you have senses of a different nature, you will be a totally different being."

To this reasoning, profane philosophy had nothing to reply. Yet, agreeably to that contradiction or perverseness which distinguishes the human species, and seems to constitute the very foundation of our nature, at the very time when Cicero publicly declared that "not even an old woman was to be found who believed in such absurdities," Lucretius admitted that these ideas were powerfully impressive upon men's minds; his object, he says, is to destroy them:

… Si certum finem esse viderent
Ærumnarum homines, aliqua ratione valerent
Religionibus atque minis obsistere vatum.
Nunc ratio nulla est restandi, nulla facultas;
Æternas quoniam poenas in morte timendum.

– LUCRETIUS, i. 108.

… If it once appear
That after death there's neither hope nor fear;
Then might men freely triumph, then disdain

The poet's tales, and scorn their fancied pain;
But now we must submit, since pains we fear
Eternal after death, we know not where.

– CREECH.

It was therefore true, that among the lowest classes of the people, some laughed at hell, and others trembled at it. Some regarded Cerberus, the Furies, and Pluto as ridiculous fables, others perpetually presented offerings to the infernal gods. It was with them just as it is now among ourselves:

Et quocumque tamen miseri venere, parentant,
Et nigros mactant pecudes, et Manibus divis
Inferias mittunt multoque in rebus acerbis
Acrius admittunt animos ad religionem.

– LUCRETIUS, iii. 51.

Nay, more than that, where'er the wretches come
They sacrifice black sheep on every tomb,
To please the manes; and of all the rout,
When cares and dangers press, grow most devout.

– CREECH.

Many philosophers who had no belief in the fables about hell, were yet desirous that the people should retain that belief. Such was Zimens of Locris. Such was the political historian Polybius. "Hell," says he, "is useless to sages, but necessary to the blind

and brutal populace."

It is well known that the law of the Pentateuch never announces a hell. All mankind was involved in this chaos of contradiction and uncertainty, when Jesus Christ came into the world. He confirmed the ancient doctrine of hell, not the doctrine of the heathen poets, not that of the Egyptian priests, but that which Christianity adopted, and to which everything must yield. He announced a kingdom that was about to come, and a hell that should have no end.

He said, in express words, at Capernaum in Galilee, "Whosoever shall call his brother '*Raca*,' shall be condemned by the sanhedrim; but whosoever shall call him 'fool,' shall be condemned to *Gehenna Hinnom*, Gehenna of fire."

This proves two things, first, that Jesus Christ was adverse to abuse and reviling; for it belonged only to Him, as master, to call the Pharisees hypocrites, and a "generation of vipers."

Secondly, that those who revile their neighbor deserve hell; for the Gehenna of fire was in the valley of Hinnom, where victims had formerly been burned in sacrifice to Moloch, and this Gehenna was typical of the fire of hell.

He says, in another place, "If any one shall offend one of the weak who believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea.

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than to go into the Gehenna of inextinguishable fire, where the worm dies not, and where the

fire is not quenched.

"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter lame into eternal life, than to be cast with two feet into the inextinguishable Gehenna, where the worm dies not; and where the fire is not quenched.

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to be cast with both eyes into the Gehenna of fire, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.

"For everyone shall be burned with fire, and every victim shall be salted with salt.

"Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savor, with what will you salt?

"You have salt in yourselves, preserve peace one with another."

He said on another occasion, on His journey to Jerusalem, "When the master of the house shall have entered and shut the door, you will remain without, and knock, saying, 'Lord, open unto us;' and he will answer and say unto you, '*Nescio vos*,' I know you not; whence are you? And then ye shall begin to say, we have eaten and drunk with thee, and thou hast taught in our public places; and he will reply, '*Nescio vos*,' whence are you, workers of iniquity? And there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see there Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets, and yourselves cast out."

Notwithstanding the other positive declarations made by the

Saviour of mankind, which assert the eternal damnation of all who do not belong to our church, Origen and some others were not believers in the eternity of punishments.

The Socinians reject such punishments; but they are without the pale. The Lutherans and Calvinists, although they have strayed beyond the pale, yet admit the doctrine of a hell without end.

When men came to live in society, they must have perceived that a great number of criminals eluded the severity of the laws; the laws punished public crimes; it was necessary to establish a check upon secret crimes; this check was to be found only in religion. The Persians, Chaldæans, Egyptians, and Greeks, entertained the idea of punishments after the present life, and of all the nations of antiquity that we are acquainted with, the Jews, as we have already remarked, were the only one who admitted solely temporal punishments. It is ridiculous to believe, or pretend to believe, from some excessively obscure passages, that hell was recognized by the ancient laws of the Jews, by their Leviticus, or by their Decalogue, when the author of those laws says not a single word which can bear the slightest relation to the chastisements of a future life. We might have some right to address the compiler of the Pentateuch in such language as the following: "You are a man of no consistency, as destitute of probity as understanding, and totally unworthy of the name which you arrogate to yourself of legislator. What! you are perfectly acquainted, it seems, with that doctrine so

eminently repressive of human vice, so necessary to the virtue and happiness of mankind – the doctrine of hell; and yet you do not explicitly announce it; and, while it is admitted by all the nations which surround you, you are content to leave it for some commentators, after four thousand years have passed away, to suspect that this doctrine might possibly have been entertained by you, and to twist and torture your expressions, in order to find that in them which you have never said. Either you are grossly ignorant not to know that this belief was universal in Egypt, Chaldæa, and Persia; or you have committed the most disgraceful error in judgment, in not having made it the foundation-stone of your religion."

The authors of the Jewish laws could at most only answer: "We confess that we are excessively ignorant; that we did not learn the art of writing until a late period; that our people were a wild and barbarous horde, that wandered, as our own records admit, for nearly half a century in impracticable deserts, and at length obtained possession of a petty territory by the most odious rapine and detestable cruelty ever mentioned in the records of history. We had no commerce with civilized nations, and how could you suppose that, so grossly mean and grovelling as we are in all our ideas and usages, we should have invented a system so refined and spiritual as that in question?"

We employed the word which most nearly corresponds with soul, merely to signify life; we know our God and His ministers, His angels, only as corporeal beings; the distinction of soul and

body, the idea of a life beyond death, can be the fruit only of long meditation and refined philosophy. Ask the Hottentots and negroes, who inhabit a country a hundred times larger than ours, whether they know anything of a life to come? We thought we had done enough in persuading the people under our influence that God punished offenders to the fourth generation, either by leprosy, by sudden death, or by the loss of the little property of which the criminal might be possessed.

To this apology it might be replied: "You have invented a system, the ridicule and absurdity of which are as clear as the sun at noon-day; for the offender who enjoyed good health, and whose family were in prosperous circumstances, must absolutely have laughed you to scorn."

The apologist for the Jewish law would here rejoin: "You are much mistaken; since for one criminal who reasoned correctly, there were a hundred who never reasoned at all. The man who, after he had committed a crime, found no punishment of it attached to himself or his son, would yet tremble for his grandson. Besides, if after the time of committing his offence he was not speedily seized with some festering sore, such as our nation was extremely subject to, he would experience it in the course of years. Calamities are always occurring in a family, and we, without difficulty, instilled the belief that these calamities were inflicted by the hand of God taking vengeance for secret offences."

It would be easy to reply to this answer by saying: "Your

apology is worth nothing; for it happens every day that very worthy and excellent persons lose their health and their property; and, if there were no family that did not experience calamity, and that calamity at the same time was a chastisement from God, all the families of your community must have been made up of scoundrels."

The Jewish priest might again answer and say that there are some calamities inseparable from human nature, and others expressly inflicted by the hand of God. But, in return, we should point out to such a reasoner the absurdity of considering fever and hail-stones in some cases as divine punishments; in others as mere natural effects.

In short, the Pharisees and the Essenians among the Jews did admit, according to certain notions of their own, the belief of a hell. This dogma had passed from the Greeks to the Romans, and was adopted by the Christians.

Many of the fathers of the church rejected the doctrine of eternal punishments. It appeared to them absurd to burn to all eternity an unfortunate man for stealing a goat. Virgil has finely said:

> *… Sedit eternumque sedebit*
> *Infelix Theseus.*
>
> Unhappy Theseus, doomed forever there,
> Is fixed by fate on his eternal chair.

– DRYDEN.

But it is vain for him to maintain or imply that Theseus is forever fixed to his chair, and that this position constitutes his punishment. Others have imagined Theseus to be a hero who could never be seen on any seat in hell, and who was to be found in the Elysian Fields.

A Calvinistical divine, of the name of Petit Pierre, not long since preached and published the doctrine that the damned would at some future period be pardoned. The rest of the ministers of his association told him that they wished for no such thing. The dispute grew warm. It was said that the king, whose subjects they were, wrote to him, that since they were desirous of being damned without redemption, he could have no reasonable objection, and freely gave his consent. The damned majority of the church of Neufchâtel ejected poor Petit Pierre, who had thus converted hell into a mere purgatory. It is stated that one of them said to him: "My good friend, I no more believe in the eternity of hell than yourself; but recollect that it may be no bad thing, perhaps, for your servant, your tailor, and your lawyer to believe in it."

I will add, as an illustration of this passage, a short address of exhortation to those philosophers who in their writings deny a hell; I will say to them: "Gentlemen, we do not pass our days with Cicero, Atticus, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, the Chancellor de l'Hôpital, La Mothe le Vayer, Desyveteaux, René Descartes,

Newton, or Locke, nor with the respectable Bayle, who was superior to the power and frown of fortune, nor with the too scrupulously virtuous infidel Spinoza, who, although laboring under poverty and destitution, gave back to the children of the grand pensionary De Witt an allowance of three hundred florins, which had been granted him by that great statesman, whose heart, it may be remembered, the Hollanders actually devoured, although there was nothing to be gained by it. Every man with whom we intermingle in life is not a des Barreaux, who paid the pleaders their fees for a cause which he had forgotten to bring into court. Every woman is not a Ninon de L'Enclos, who guarded deposits in trust with religious fidelity, while the gravest personages in the state were violating them. In a word, gentlemen, all the world are not philosophers.

"We are obliged to hold intercourse and transact business, and mix up in life with knaves possessing little or no reflection – with vast numbers of persons addicted to brutality, intoxication, and rapine. You may, if you please, preach to them that there is no hell, and that the soul of man is mortal. As for myself, I will be sure to thunder in their ears that if they rob me they will inevitably be damned. I will imitate the country clergyman, who, having had a great number of sheep stolen from him, at length said to his hearers, in the course of one of his sermons: 'I cannot conceive what Jesus Christ was thinking about when he died for such a set of scoundrels as you are.'"

There is an excellent book for fools called "The Christian

Pedagogue," composed by the reverend father d'Outreman, of the Society of Jesus, and enlarged by Coulon, curé of Ville-Juif-les-Paris. This book has passed, thank God, through fifty-one editions, although not a single page in it exhibits a gleam of common sense.

Friar Outreman asserts – in the hundred and fifty-seventh page of the second edition in quarto – that one of Queen Elizabeth's ministers, Baron Hunsdon, predicted to Cecil, secretary of state, and to six other members of the cabinet council, that they as well as he would be damned; which, he says, was actually the case, and is the case with all heretics. It is most likely that Cecil and the other members of the council gave no credit to the said Baron Hunsdon; but if the fictitious baron had said the same to six common citizens, they would probably have believed him.

Were the time ever to arrive in which no citizen of London believed in a hell, what course of conduct would be adopted? What restraint upon wickedness would exist? There would exist the feeling of honor, the restraint of the laws, that of the Deity Himself, whose will it is that mankind shall be just, whether there be a hell or not.

HELL (DESCENT INTO)

Our colleague who wrote the article on "Hell" has made no mention of the descent of Jesus Christ into hell. This is an article of faith of high importance; it is expressly particularized in the creed of which we have already spoken. It is asked whence this article of faith is derived; for it is not to be found in either of our four gospels, and the creed called the Apostles' Creed is not older than the age of those learned priests, Jerome, Augustine, and Rufinus.

It is thought that this descent of our Lord into hell is taken originally from the gospel of Nicodemus, one of the oldest.

In that gospel the prince of Tartarus and Satan, after a long conversation with Adam, Enoch, Elias the Tishbite, and David, hears a voice like the thunder, and a voice like a tempest. David says to the prince of Tartarus, "Now, thou foul and miscreant prince of hell, open thy gates and let the King of Glory enter," etc. While he was thus addressing the prince, the Lord of Majesty appeared suddenly in the form of man, and He lighted up the eternal darkness, and broke asunder the indissoluble bars, and by an invincible virtue He visited those who lay in the depth of the darkness of guilt, in the shadow of the depth of sin.

Jesus Christ appeared with St. Michael; He overcame death; He took Adam by the hand; and the good thief followed Him, bearing the cross. All this took place in hell, in the presence

of Carinus and Lenthius, who were resuscitated for the express purpose of giving evidence of the fact to the priests Ananias and Caiaphas, and to Doctor Gamaliel, at that time St. Paul's master.

This gospel of Nicodemus has long been considered as of no authority. But a confirmation of this descent into hell is found in the First Epistle of St. Peter, at the close of the third chapter: "Because Christ died once for our sins, the just for the unjust, that He might offer us to God; dead indeed in the flesh, but resuscitated in spirit, by which He went to preach to the spirits that were in prison."

Many of the fathers interpreted this passage very differently, but all were agreed as to the fact of the descent of Jesus into hell after His death. A frivolous difficulty was started upon the subject. He had, while upon the cross, said to the good thief: "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." By going to hell, therefore, He failed to perform His promise. This objection is easily answered by saying that He took him first to hell and afterwards to paradise; but, then, what becomes of the stay of three days?

Eusebius of Cæsarea says that Jesus left His body, without waiting for Death to come and seize it; and that, on the contrary, He seized Death, who, in terror and agony, embraced His feet, and afterwards attempted to escape by flight, but was prevented by Jesus, who broke down the gates of the dungeons which enclosed the souls of the saints, drew them forth from their confinement, resuscitated them, then resuscitated Himself, and

conducted them in triumph to that heavenly Jerusalem *which descended from heaven every night*, and was actually seen by the astonished eyes of St. Justin.

It was a question much disputed whether all those who were resuscitated died again before they ascended into heaven. St. Thomas, in his "Summary," asserts that they died again. This also is the opinion of the discriminating and judicious Calmet. "We maintain," says he, in his dissertation on this great question, "that the saints who were resuscitated, after the death of the Saviour died again, in order to revive hereafter."

God had permitted, ages before, that the profane Gentiles should imitate in anticipation these sacred truths. The ancients imagined that the gods resuscitated Pelops; that Orpheus extricated Eurydice from hell, at least for a moment; that Hercules delivered Alcestis from it; that Æsculapius resuscitated Hippolytus, etc. Let us ever discriminate between fable and truth, and keep our minds in the same subjection with respect to whatever surprises and astonishes us, as with respect to whatever appears perfectly conformable to their circumscribed and narrow views.

HERESY

SECTION I

A Greek word, signifying "belief, or elected opinion." It is not greatly to the honor of human reason that men should be hated, persecuted, massacred, or burned at the stake, on account of their chosen opinions; but what is exceedingly little to our honor is that this mischievous and destructive madness has been as peculiar to us as leprosy was to the Hebrews, or lues formerly to the Caribs.

We well know, theologically speaking, that heresy having become a crime, as even the word itself is a reproach; we well know, I say, that the Latin church, which alone can possess reason, has also possessed the right of reproving all who were of a different opinion from her own.

On the other side, the Greek church had the same right; accordingly, it reproved the Romans when they chose a different opinion from the Greeks on the procession of the Holy Spirit, the viands which might be taken in Lent, the authority of the pope, etc.

But upon what ground did any arrive finally at the conclusion that, when they were the strongest, they might burn those who entertained chosen opinions of their own? Those who had such opinions were undoubtedly criminal in the sight of God, since

they were obstinate. They will, therefore, as no one can possibly doubt, be burned to all eternity in another world; but why burn them by a slow fire in this? The sufferers have represented that such conduct is a usurpation of the jurisdiction of God; that this punishment is very hard and severe, considered as an infliction by men; and that it is, moreover, of no utility, since one hour of suffering added to eternity is an absolute cipher.

The pious inflicters, however, replied to these reproaches that nothing was more just than to put upon burning coals whoever had a self-formed opinion; that to burn those whom God Himself would burn, was in fact a holy conformity to God; and finally, that since, by admission, the burning for an hour or two was a mere cipher in comparison with eternity, the burning of five or six provinces for chosen opinions – for heresies – was a matter in reality of very little consequence.

In the present day it is asked, "Among what cannibals have these questions been agitated, and their solutions proved by facts?" We must admit with sorrow and humiliation that it was asked even among ourselves, and in the very same cities where nothing is minded but operas, comedies, balls, fashions, and intrigue.

Unfortunately, it was a tyrant who introduced the practice of destroying heretics – not one of those equivocal tyrants who are regarded as saints by one party, and monsters by another, but one Maximus, competitor of Theodosius I., a decided tyrant, in the strictest meaning of the term, over the whole empire.

He destroyed at Trier, by the hands of the executioner, the Spaniard Priscillian and his adherents, whose opinions were pronounced erroneous by some bishops of Spain. These prelates solicited the capital punishment of the Priscillianists with a charity so ardent that Maximus could refuse them nothing. It was by no means owing to them that St. Martin was not beheaded as a heretic. He was fortunate enough to quit Trier and escape back to Tours.

A single example is sufficient to establish a usage. The first Scythian who scooped out the brains of his enemy and made a drinking-cup of his skull, was allowed all the rank and consequence in Scythia. Thus was consecrated the practice of employing the executioner to cut off "opinions."

No such thing as heresy existed among the religions of antiquity, because they had reference only to moral conduct and public worship. When metaphysics became connected with Christianity, controversy prevailed; and from controversy arose different parties, as in the schools of philosophy. It was impossible that metaphysics should not mingle the uncertainties essential to their nature with the faith due to Jesus Christ. He had Himself written nothing; and His incarnation was a problem which the new Christians, whom He had not Himself inspired, solved in many different ways. "Each," as St. Paul expressly observes, "had his peculiar party; some were for Apollos, others for Cephas."

Christians in general, for a long time, assumed the name of

Nazarenes, and even the Gentiles gave them no other appellations during the two first centuries. But there soon arose a particular school of Nazarenes, who believed a gospel different from the four canonical ones. It has even been pretended that this gospel differed only very slightly from that of St. Matthew, and was in fact anterior to it. St. Epiphanius and St. Jerome place the Nazarenes in the cradle of Christianity.

Those who considered themselves as knowing more than the rest, took the denomination of gnostics, "knowers"; and this denomination was for a long time so honorable that St. Clement of Alexandria, in his "*Stromata*" always calls the good Christians true gnostics. "Happy are they who have entered into the gnostic holiness! He who deserves the name of gnostic resists seducers and gives to every one that asks." The fifth and sixth books of the "*Stromata*" turn entirely upon the perfection of gnosticism.

The Ebionites existed incontestably in the time of the apostles. That name, which signifies "poor," was intended to express how dear to them was the poverty in which Jesus was born.

Cerinthus was equally ancient. The "Apocalypse" of St. John was attributed to him. It is even thought that St. Paul and he had violent disputes with each other.

It seems to our weak understandings very natural to expect from the first disciples a solemn declaration, a complete and unalterable profession of faith, which might terminate all past, and preclude any future quarrels; but God permitted it not so to be. The creed called the "Apostles' Creed," which is short, and in

which are not to be found the consubstantiality, the word trinity, or the seven sacraments, did not make its appearance before the time of St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and the celebrated priest Rufinus. It was by this priest, the enemy of St. Jerome, that we are told it was compiled. Heresies had had time to multiply, and more than fifty were enumerated as existing in the fifth century.

Without daring to scrutinize the ways of Providence, which are impenetrable by the human mind, and merely consulting, as far as we are permitted, our feeble reason, it would seem that of so many opinions on so many articles, there would always exist one which must prevail, which was the orthodox, "the right of teaching." The other societies, besides the really orthodox, soon assumed that title also; but being the weaker parties, they had given to them the designation of "heretics."

When, in the progress of time, the Christian church in the East, which was the mother of that in the West, had irreparably broken with her daughter, each remained sovereign in her distinct sphere, and each had her particular heresies, arising out of the dominant opinion.

The barbarians of the North, having but recently become Christians, could not entertain the same opinions as Southern countries, because they could not adopt the same usages. They could not, for example, for a long time adore images, as they had neither painters nor sculptors. It also was somewhat dangerous to baptize an infant in winter, in the Danube, the Weser, or the Elbe.

It was no easy matter for the inhabitants of the shores of the Baltic to know precisely the opinions held in the Milanese and the march of Ancona. The people of the South and of the North of Europe had therefore chosen opinions different from each other. This seems to me to be the reason why Claude, bishop of Turin, preserved in the ninth century all the usages and dogmas received in the seventh and eighth, from the country of the Allobroges, as far as the Elbe and the Danube.

These dogmas and usages became fixed and permanent among the inhabitants of valleys and mountainous recesses, and near the banks of the Rhône, among a sequestered and almost unknown people, whom the general desolation left untouched in their seclusion and poverty, until they at length became known, under the name of the Vaudois in the twelfth, and that of the Albigenses in the thirteenth century. It is known how their chosen opinions were treated; what crusades were preached against them; what carnage was made among them; and that, from that period to the present day, Europe has not enjoyed a single year of tranquillity and toleration.

It is a great evil to be a heretic; but is it a great good to maintain orthodoxy by soldiers and executioners? Would it not be better that every man should eat his bread in peace under the shade of his own fig-tree? I suggest so bold a proposition with fear and trembling.

SECTION II

Of the Extirpation of Heresies

It appears to me that, in relation to heresies, we ought to distinguish between opinion and faction. From the earliest times of Christianity opinions were divided, as we have already seen. The Christians of Alexandria did not think, on many points, like those of Antioch. The Achaians were opposed to the Asiatics. This difference has existed through all past periods of our religion, and probably will always continue. Jesus Christ, who might have united all believers in the same sentiment, has not, in fact, done so; we must, therefore, presume that He did not desire it, and that it was His design to exercise in all churches the spirit of indulgence and charity, by permitting the existence of different systems of faith, while all should be united in acknowledging Him for their chief and master. All the varying sects, a long while tolerated by the emperors, or concealed from their observation, had no power to persecute and proscribe one another, as they were all equally subject to the Roman magistrates. They possessed only the power of disputing with each other. When the magistrates prosecuted them, they all claimed the rights of nature. They said: "Permit us to worship God in peace; do not deprive us of the liberty you allow to the

Jews."

All the different sects existing at present may hold the same language to those who oppress them. They may say to the nations who have granted privileges to the Jews: Treat us as you treat these sons of Jacob; let us, like them, worship God according to the dictates of conscience. Our opinion is not more injurious to your state or realm than Judaism. You tolerate the enemies of Jesus Christ; tolerate us, therefore, who adore Jesus Christ, and differ from yourselves only upon subtle points of theology; do not deprive yourselves of the services of useful subjects. It is of consequence to you to obtain their labor and skill in your manufactures, your marine, and your agriculture, and it is of no consequence at all to you that they hold a few articles of faith different from your own. What you want is their work, and not their catechism.

Faction is a thing perfectly different. It always happens, as a matter of necessity, that a persecuted sect degenerates into a faction. The oppressed unite, and console and encourage one another. They have more industry to strengthen their party than the dominant sect has for their extermination. To crush them or be crushed by them is the inevitable alternative. Such was the case after the persecution raised in 303 by the Cæsar, Galerius, during the last two years of the reign of Diocletian. The Christians, after having been favored by Diocletian for the long period of eighteen years, had become too numerous and wealthy to be extirpated. They joined the party of Constantius Chlorus;

they fought for Constantine his son; and a complete revolution took place in the empire.

We may compare small things to great, when both are under the direction of the same principle or spirit. A similar revolution happened in Holland, in Scotland, and in Switzerland. When Ferdinand and Isabella expelled from Spain the Jews, – who were settled there not merely before the reigning dynasty, but before the Moors and Goths, and even the Carthaginians – the Jews would have effected a revolution in that country if they had been as warlike as they were opulent, and if they could have come to an understanding with the Arabs.

In a word, no sect has ever changed the government of a country but when it was furnished with arms by despair. Mahomet himself would not have succeeded had he not been expelled from Mecca and a price set upon his head.

If you are desirous, therefore, to prevent the overflow of a state by any sect, show it toleration. Imitate the wise conduct exhibited at the present day by Germany, England, Holland, Denmark, and Russia. There is no other policy to be adopted with respect to a new sect than to destroy, without remorse, both leaders and followers, men, women, and children, without a single exception, or to tolerate them when they are numerous. The first method is that of a monster, the second that of a sage.

Bind to the state all the subjects of that state by their interest; let the Quaker and the Turk find their advantage in living under your laws. Religion is between God and man; civil law is between

you and your people.

SECTION III

It is impossible not to regret the loss of a "History of Heresies," which Strategius wrote by order of Constantine. Ammianus Marcellinus informs us that the emperor, wishing to ascertain the opinions of the different sects, and not finding any other person who could give correct ideas on the subject, imposed the office of drawing up a report or narrative upon it on that officer, who acquitted himself so well, that Constantine was desirous of his being honored in consequence with the name of Musonianus. M. de Valois, in his notes upon Ammianus, observes that Strategius, who was appointed prefect of the East, possessed as much knowledge and eloquence, as moderation and mildness; such, at least, is the eulogium passed upon him by Libanius.

The choice of a layman by the emperor shows that an ecclesiastic at that time had not the qualities indispensable for a task so delicate. In fact, St. Augustine remarks that a bishop of Bresse, called Philastrius, whose work is to be found in the collection of the fathers, having collected all the heresies, even including those which existed among the Jews before the coming of Jesus Christ, reckons twenty-eight of the latter and one hundred and twenty-eight from the coming of Christ; while St. Epiphanius, comprising both together, makes the whole number but eighty. The reason assigned by St. Augustine for this

difference is, that what appears heresy to the one, does not appear so to the other. Accordingly this father tells the Manichæans: "We take the greatest care not to treat you with rigor; such conduct we leave to those who know not what pains are necessary for the discovery of truth, and how difficult it is to avoid falling into errors; we leave it to those who know not with what sighs and groans even a very slight knowledge of the divine nature is alone to be acquired. For my own part, I consider it my duty to bear with you as I was borne with formerly myself, and to show you the same tolerance which I experienced when I was in error."

If, however, any one considers the infamous imputations, which we have noticed under the article on "Genealogy," and the abominations of which this professedly indulgent and candid father accused the Manichæans in the celebration of their mysteries – as we shall see under the article on "Zeal" – we shall be convinced that toleration was never the virtue of the clergy. We have already seen, under the article on "Council," what seditions were excited by the ecclesiastics in relation to Arianism. Eusebius informs us that in some places the statues of Constantine were thrown down because he wished the Arians to be tolerated; and Sozomen says that on the death of Eusebius of Nicomedia, when Macedonius, an Arian, contested the see of Constantinople with Paul, a Catholic, the disturbance and confusion became so dreadful in the church, from which each endeavored to expel the other, that the soldiers, thinking the people in a state of insurrection, actually charged upon them;

a fierce and sanguinary conflict ensued, and more than three thousand persons were slain or suffocated. Macedonius ascended the episcopal throne, took speedy possession of all the churches, and persecuted with great cruelty the Novatians and Catholics. It was in revenge against the latter of these that he denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, just as he recognized the divinity of the Word, which was denied by the Arians out of mere defiance to their protector Constantius, who had deposed him.

The same historian adds that on the death of Athanasius, the Arians, supported by Valens, apprehended, bound in chains, and put to death those who remained attached to Peter, whom Athanasius had pointed out as his successor. Alexandria resembled a city taken by assault. The Arians soon possessed themselves of the churches, and the bishop, installed by them, obtained the power of banishing from Egypt all who remained attached to the Nicean creed.

We read in Socrates that, after the death of Sisinnius, the church of Constantinople became again divided on the choice of a successor, and Theodosius the Younger placed in the patriarchal see the violent and fiery Nestorius. In his first sermon he addresses the following language to the emperor: "Give me the land purged of heretics, and I will give you the kingdom of Heaven; second me in the extermination of heretics, and I engage to furnish you with effectual assistance against the Persians." He afterwards expelled the Arians from the capital, armed the people against them, pulled down their churches, and obtained

from the emperor rigorous and persecuting edicts to effect their extirpation. He employed his powerful influence subsequently in procuring the arrest, imprisonment, and even whipping of the principal persons among the people who had interrupted him in the middle of a discourse, in which he was delivering his distinguishing system of doctrine, which was soon condemned at the Council of Ephesus.

Photius relates that when the priest reached the altar, it was customary in the church of Constantinople for the people to chant: "Holy God, powerful God, immortal God"; and the name given to this part of the service was "the trisagion." The priest, Peter had added: "Who hast been crucified for us, have mercy upon us." The Catholics considered this addition as containing the error of the Eutychian Theopathists, who maintained that the divinity had suffered; they, however, chanted the trisagion with the addition, to avoid irritating the emperor Anastasius, who had just deposed another Macedonius, and placed in his stead Timotheus, by whose order this addition was ordered to be chanted. But on a particular day the monks entered the church, and, instead of the addition in question, chanted a verse from one of the Psalms: the people instantly exclaimed: "The orthodox have arrived very seasonably!" All the partisans of the Council of Chalcedon chanted, in union with the monks, the verse from the Psalm; the Eutychians were offended; the service was interrupted; a battle commenced in the church; the people rushed out, obtained arms as speedily as possible, spread carnage

and conflagration through the city, and were pacified only by the destruction of ten thousand lives.

The imperial power at length established through all Egypt the authority of this Council of Chalcedon; but the massacre of more than a hundred thousand Egyptians, on different occasions, for having refused to acknowledge the council, had planted in the hearts of the whole population an implacable hatred against the emperors. A part of those who were hostile to the council withdrew to Upper Egypt, others quitted altogether the dominions of the empire and passed over to Africa and among the Arabs, where all religions were tolerated.

We have already observed that under the reign of the empress Irene the worship of images was re-established and confirmed by the second Council of Nice. Leo the Armenian, Michael the Stammerer, and Theophilus, neglected nothing to effect its abolition; and this opposition caused further disturbance in the empire of Constantinople, till the reign of the empress Theodora, who gave the force of law to the second Council of Nice, extinguished the party of Iconoclasts, or image-breakers, and exerted the utmost extent of her authority against the Manichæans. She despatched orders throughout the empire to seek for them everywhere, and put all those to death who would not recant. More than a hundred thousand perished by different modes of execution. Four thousand, who escaped from this severe scrutiny and extensive punishment, took refuge among the Saracens, united their own strength with theirs, ravaged the

territories of the empire, and erected fortresses in which the Manichæans, who had remained concealed through terror of capital punishment, found an asylum, and constituted a hostile force, formidable from their numbers, and from their burning hatred both of the emperors and Catholics. They frequently inflicted on the territories of the empire dread and devastation, and cut to pieces its disciplined armies.

We abridge the details of these dreadful massacres; those of Ireland, those of the valleys of Piedmont, those which we shall speak of in the article on "Inquisition," and lastly, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, displayed in the West the same spirit of intolerance, against which nothing more pertinent and sensible has been written than what we find in the works of Salvian.

The following is the language employed respecting the followers of one of the principal heresies by this excellent priest of Marseilles, who was surnamed the master of bishops, who deplored with bitterness the violence and vices of his age, and who was called the Jeremiah of the fifth century. "The Arians," says he, "are heretics; but they do not know it; they are heretics among us, but they are not so among themselves; for they consider themselves so perfectly and completely Catholic, that they treat us as heretics. We are convinced that they entertain an opinion injurious to the divine generation, inasmuch as they say that the Son is less than the Father. They, on the other hand, think that we hold an opinion injurious to the Father, because we regard the Father and the Son equal. The truth is with us, but they

consider it as favoring them. We give to God the honor which is due to Him, but they, according to their peculiar way of thinking, maintain that they do the same. They do not acquit themselves of their duty; but in the very point where they fail in doing so, they make the greatest duty of religion consist. They are impious, but even in being so they consider themselves as following, and as practising, genuine piety. They are then mistaken, but from a principle of love to God; and, although they have not the true faith, they regard that which they have actually embraced as the perfect love of God.

"The sovereign judge of the universe alone knows how they will be punished for their errors in the day of judgment. In the meantime he patiently bears with them, because he sees that if they are in error, they err from pure motives of piety."

HERMES

Hermes, or Ermes, Mercury Trismegistus, or Thaut, or Taut, or Thot

We neglect reading the ancient book of Mercury Trismegistus, and we are not wrong in so doing. To philosophers it has appeared a sublime piece of jargon, and it is perhaps for this reason that they believed it the work of a great Platonist.

Nevertheless, in this theological chaos, how many things there are to astonish and subdue the human mind! God, whose triple essence is wisdom, power and bounty; God, forming the world by His thought, His word; God creating subaltern gods; God commanding these gods to direct the celestial orbs, and to preside over the world; the sun; the Son of God; man His image in thought; light, His principal work a divine essence – all these grand and lively images dazzle a subdued imagination.

It remains to be known whether this work, as much celebrated as little read, was the work of a Greek or of an Egyptian. St. Augustine hesitates not in believing that it is the work of an Egyptian, who pretended to be descended from the ancient Mercury, from the ancient Thaut, the first legislator of Egypt. It is true that St. Augustine knew no more of the Egyptian than of

the Greek; but in his time it was necessary that we should not doubt that Hermes, from whom we received theology, was an Egyptian sage, probably anterior to the time of Alexander, and one of the priests whom Plato consulted.

It has always appeared to me that the theology of Plato in nothing resembled that of other Greeks, with the exception of Timæus, who had travelled in Egypt, as well as Pythagoras.

The Hermes Trismegistus that we possess is written in barbarous Greek, and in a foreign idiom. This is a proof that it is a translation in which the words have been followed more than the sense.

Joseph Scaliger, who assisted the lord of Candale, bishop of Aire, to translate the Hermes, or Mercury Trismegistus, doubts not that the original was Egyptian. Add to these reasons that it is not very probable that a Greek would have addressed himself so often to Thaut. It is not natural for us to address ourselves to strangers with so much warm-heartedness; at least, we see no example of it in antiquity.

The Egyptian Æsculapius, who is made to speak in this book, and who is perhaps the author of it, wrote to Ammon, king of Egypt: "Take great care how you suffer the Greeks to translate the books of our Mercury, our Thaut, because they would disfigure them." Certainly a Greek would not have spoken thus; there is therefore every appearance of this book being Egyptian.

There is another reflection to be made, which is, that the

systems of Hermes and Plato were equally formed to extend themselves through all the Jewish schools, from the time of the Ptolemies. This doctrine made great progress in them; you see it completely displayed by the Jew Philo, a learned man after the manner of those times.

He copies entire passages from Mercury Trismegistus in his chapter on the formation of the world. "Firstly," says he, "God made the world intelligible, the Heavens incorporeal, and the earth invisible; he afterwards created the incorporeal essence of water and spirit; and finally the essence of incorporeal light, the origin of the sun and of the stars."

Such is the pure doctrine of Hermes. He adds that the word, or invisible and intellectual thought, is the image of God. Here is the creation of the world by the word, by thought, by the *logos*, very strongly expressed.

Afterwards follows the doctrine of Numbers, which descended from the Egyptians to the Jews. He calls reason the relation of God. The number of seven is the accomplishment of all things, "which is the reason," says he, "that the lyre has only seven strings."

In a word Philo possessed all the philosophy of his time.

We are therefore deceived, when we believe that the Jews, under the reign of Herod, were plunged in the same state of ignorance in which they were previously immersed. It is evident that St. Paul was well informed. It is only necessary to read the first chapter of St. John, which is so different from those of the

others, to perceive that the author wrote precisely like Hermes and Plato. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of man." It is thus that St. Paul says: "God made the worlds by His Son."

In the time of the apostles were seen whole societies of Christians who were only too learned, and thence substituted a fantastic philosophy for simplicity of faith. The Simons, Menanders, and Cerinthuses, taught precisely the doctrines of Hermes. Their Æons were only the subaltern gods, created by the great Being. All the first Christians, therefore, were not ignorant men, as it always has been asserted; since there were several of them who abused their literature; even in the Acts the governor Festus says to St. Paul: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."

Cerinthus dogmatized in the time of St. John the Evangelist. His errors were of a profound, refined, and metaphysical cast. The faults which he remarked in the construction of the world made him think – at least so says Dr. Dupin – that it was not the sovereign God who created it, but a virtue inferior to this first principle, which had not the knowledge of the sovereign God. This was wishing to correct even the system of Plato, and deceiving himself, both as a Christian and a philosopher; but at the same time it displayed a refined and well-exercised mind.

It is the same with the primitives called Quakers, of whom we have so much spoken. They have been taken for men who cannot see beyond their noses, and who make no use of their reason. However, there have been among them several who employed all the subtleties of logic. Enthusiasm is not always the companion of total ignorance, it is often that of erroneous information.

HISTORIOGRAPHER

This is a title very different from that of historian. In France we commonly see men of letters pensioned, and, as it was said formerly, appointed to write history. Alain Chartier was the historiographer of Charles VII.; he says that he interrogated the domestics of this prince, and put them on their oaths, according to the duty of his charge, to ascertain whether Charles really had Agnes Sorel for his mistress. He concludes that nothing improper ever passed between these lovers; and that all was reduced to a few honest caresses, to which these domestics had been the innocent witnesses. However, it is proved, not by historiographers, but by historians supported by family titles, that Charles VII. had three daughters by Agnes Sorel, the eldest of whom, married to one Breze, was stabbed by her husband. From this time there were often titled historiographers in France, and it was the custom to give them commissions of councillors of state, with the provisions of their charge. They were commensal officers of the king's house. Matthieu had these privileges under Henry IV., but did not therefore write a better history.

At Venice it is always a noble of the senate who possesses this title and function, and the celebrated Nani has filled them with general approbation. It is very difficult for the historiographer of a prince not to be a liar; that of a republic flatters less; but he does not tell all the truth. In China historiographers are charged with

collecting all the events and original titles under a dynasty. They throw the leaves numbered into a vast hall, through an orifice resembling the lion's mouth at Venice, into which is cast all secret intelligence. When the dynasty is extinct the hall is opened and the materials digested, of which an authentic history is composed. The general journal of the empire also serves to form the body of history; this journal is superior to our newspapers, being made under the superintendence of the mandarins of each province, revised by a supreme tribunal, and every piece bearing an authenticity which is decisive in contentious matters.

Every sovereign chose his own historiographer. Vittorio Siri was one; Pelisson was first chosen by Louis XIV. to write the events of his reign, and acquitted himself of his task with eloquence in the history of Franche-Comté. Racine, the most elegant of poets, and Boileau, the most correct, were afterwards substituted for Pelisson. Some curious persons have collected "Memoirs of the Passage of the Rhine," written by Racine. We cannot judge by these memoirs whether Louis XIV. passed the Rhine or not with his troops, who swam across the river. This example sufficiently demonstrates how rarely it happens that an historiographer dare tell the truth. Several also, who have possessed this title, have taken good care of writing history; they have followed the example of Amyot, who said that he was too much attached to his masters to write their lives. Father Daniel had the patent of historiographer, after having given his "History of France"; he had a pension of 600 livres, regarded merely as

a suitable stipend for a monk.

It is very difficult to assign true bounds to the arts, sciences, and literary labor. Perhaps it is the proper duty of an historiographer to collect materials, and that of an historian to put them in order. The first can amass everything, the second arrange and select. The historiographer is more of the simple annalist, while the historian seems to have a more open field for reflection and eloquence.

We need scarcely say here that both should equally tell the truth, but we can examine this great law of Cicero: "*Ne quid veri tacere non audeat.*" – "That we ought not to dare to conceal any truth." This rule is of the number of those that want illustration. Suppose a prince confides to his historiographer an important secret to which his honor is attached, or that the good of the state requires should not be revealed – should the historiographer or historian break his word with the prince, or betray his country to obey Cicero? The curiosity of the public seems to exact it; honor and duty forbid it. Perhaps in this case he should renounce writing history.

If a truth dishonors a family, ought the historiographer or historian to inform the public of it? No; doubtless he is not bound to reveal the shame of individuals; history is no satire.

But if this scandalous truth belongs to public events, if it enters into the interests of the state – if it has produced evils of which it imports to know the cause, it is then that the maxims of Cicero should be observed; for this law is like all others which must be

executed, tempered, or neglected, according to circumstances.

Let us beware of this humane respect when treating of acknowledged public faults, prevarications, and injustices, into which the misfortunes of the times have betrayed respectable bodies. They cannot be too much exposed; they are beacons which warn these always-existing bodies against splitting again on similar rocks. If an English parliament has condemned a man of fortune to the torture – if an assembly of theologians had demanded the blood of an unfortunate who differed in opinion from themselves, it should be the duty of an historian to inspire all ages with horror for these juridical assassins. We should always make the Athenians blush for the death of Socrates.

Happily, even an entire people always find it good to have the crimes of their ancestors placed before them; they like to condemn them, and to believe themselves superior. The historiographer or historian encourages them in these sentiments, and, in retracing the wars of government and religion, prevents their repetition.

HISTORY

SECTION I

Definition of History.

History is the recital of facts represented as true. Fable, on the contrary, is the recital of facts represented as fiction. There is the history of human opinions, which is scarcely anything more than the history of human errors.

The history of the arts may be made the most useful of all, when to a knowledge of their invention and progress it adds a description of their mechanical means and processes.

Natural history, improperly designated "history," is an essential part of natural philosophy. The history of events has been divided into sacred and profane. Sacred history is a series of divine and miraculous operations, by which it has pleased God formerly to direct and govern the Jewish nation, and, in the present day, to try our faith. "To learn Hebrew, the sciences, and history," says La Fontaine, "is to drink up the sea."

> *Si j'apprenois l'Hébreu, les sciences, l'histoire,*
> *Tout cela, c'est la mer à boire.*
>
> *– LA FONTAINE, book viii, fable 25.*

The Foundations of History.

The foundations of all history are the recitals of events, made by fathers to their children, and afterwards transmitted from one generation to another. They are, at most, only probable in their origin when they do not shock common sense, and they lose a degree of probability at every successive transmission. With time the fabulous increases and the true disappears; hence it arises that the original traditions and records of all nations are absurd. Thus the Egyptians had been governed for many ages by the gods. They had next been under the government of demi-gods; and, finally, they had kings for eleven thousand three hundred and forty years, and during that period the sun had changed four times from east and west.

The Phœnicians, in the time of Alexander, pretended that they had been settled in their own country for thirty thousand years; and those thirty thousand years were as full of prodigies as the Egyptian chronology. I admit it to be perfectly consistent with physical possibility that Phœnicia may have existed, not merely for thirty thousand years, but thirty thousand millions of ages, and that it may have endured, as well as the other portions of the globe, thirty millions of revolutions. But of all this we possess no knowledge.

The ridiculous miracles which abound in the ancient history of Greece are universally known.

The Romans, although a serious and grave people, have, nevertheless, equally involved in fables the early periods of their

history. That nation, so recent in comparison with those of Asia, was five hundred years without historians. It is impossible, therefore, to be surprised on finding that Romulus was the son of Mars; that a she-wolf was his nurse; that he marched with a thousand men from his own village, Rome, against twenty thousand warriors belonging to the city of the Sabines; that he afterwards became a god; that the elder Tarquin cut through a stone with a razor, and that a vestal drew a ship to land with her girdle, etc.

The first annals of modern nations are no less fabulous; things prodigious and improbable ought sometimes, undoubtedly, to be related, but only as proofs of human credulity. They constitute part of the history of human opinion and absurdities; but the field is too immense.

Of Monuments or Memorials.

The only proper method of endeavoring to acquire some knowledge of ancient history is to ascertain whether there remain any incontestable public monuments. We possess only three such, in the way of writing or inscription. The first is the collection of astronomical observations made during nineteen hundred successive years at Babylon, and transferred by Alexander to Greece. This series of observations, which goes back two thousand two hundred and thirty-four years beyond our vulgar era, decidedly proves that the Babylonians existed as an associated and incorporated people many ages before; for the arts are struck out and elaborated only in the slow course of time, and

the indolence natural to mankind permits thousands of years to roll away without their acquiring any other knowledge or talents than what are required for food, clothing, shelter, and mutual destruction. Let the truth of these remarks be judged of from the state of the Germans and the English in the time of Cæsar, from that of the Tartars at the present day, from that of two-thirds of Africa, and from that of all the various nations found in the vast continent of America, excepting, in some respects, the kingdoms of Peru and Mexico, and the republic of Tlascala. Let it be recollected that in the whole of the new world not a single individual could write or read.

The second monument is the central eclipse of the sun, calculated in China two thousand one hundred and fifty-five years before our vulgar era, and admitted by all our astronomers to have actually occurred. We must apply the same remark to the Chinese as to, the people of Babylon. They had undoubtedly, long before this period, constituted a vast empire and social polity. But what places the Chinese above all the other nations of the world is that neither their laws, nor manners, nor the language exclusively spoken by their men of learning, have experienced any change in the course of about four thousand years. Yet this nation and that of India, the most ancient of all that are now subsisting, those which possess the largest and most fertile tracts of territory, those which had invented nearly all the arts almost before we were in possession even of any of them, have been always omitted, down to our time, in our pretended

universal histories. And whenever a Spaniard or a Frenchman enumerated the various nations of the globe, neither of them failed to represent his own country as the first monarchy on earth, and his king as the greatest sovereign, under the flattering hope, no doubt, that that greatest of sovereigns, after having read his book, would confer upon him a pension.

The third monument, but very inferior to the two others, is the Arundel Marbles. The chronicle of Athens was inscribed on these marbles two hundred and sixty-three years before our era, but it goes no further back than the time of Cecrops, thirteen hundred and nineteen years beyond the time of its inscription. In the history of all antiquity these are the only incontestable epochs that we possess.

Let us attend a little particularly to these marbles, which were brought from Greece by Lord Arundel. The chronicle contained in them commences fifteen hundred and seventy-seven years before our era. This, at the present time, makes an antiquity of 3,348 years, and in the course of that period you do not find a single miraculous or prodigious event on record. It is the same with the Olympiads. It must not be in reference to these that the expression can be applied of "*Græcia mendax*" (lying Greece). The Greeks well knew how to distinguish history from fable, and real facts from the tales of Herodotus; just as in relation to important public affairs, their orators borrowed nothing from the discourses of the sophists or the imagery of the poets.

The date of the taking of Troy is specified in these marbles,

but there is no mention made of Apollo's arrows, or the sacrifice of Iphigenia, or the ridiculous battles of the gods. The date of the inventions of Triptolemus and Ceres is given; but Ceres is not called goddess. Notice is taken of a poem upon the rape of Proserpine; but it is not said that she is the daughter of Jupiter and a goddess, and the wife of the god of hell.

Hercules is initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries, but not a single word is mentioned of the twelve labors, nor of his passage to Africa in his cup, nor of his divinity, nor of the great fish by which he was swallowed, and which, according to Lycophron, kept him in its belly three days and three nights.

Among us, on the contrary, a standard is brought by an angel from heaven to the monks of St. Denis; a pigeon brings a bottle of oil to the church of Rheims; two armies of serpents engage in pitched battle in Germany; an archbishop of Mentz is besieged and devoured by rats; and to complete and crown the whole, the year in which these adventures occurred, is given with the most particular precision. The abbé Langlet, also condescending to compile, compiles these contemptible fooleries, while the almanacs, for the hundredth time, repeat them. In this manner are our youth instructed and enlightened; and all these trumpery fables are put in requisition even for the education of princes!

All history is comparatively recent. It is by no means astonishing to find that we have, in fact, no profane history that goes back beyond about four thousand years. The cause of this is to be found in the revolutions of the globe, and the long

and universal ignorance of the art which transmits events by writing. There are still many nations totally unacquainted with the practice of this art. It existed only in a small number of civilized states, and even in them was confined to comparatively few hands. Nothing was more rare among the French and Germans than knowing how to write; down to the fourteenth century of our era, scarcely any public acts were attested by witnesses. It was not till the reign of Charles VII. in France, in 1454, that an attempt was made to reduce to writing some of the customs of France. The art was still more uncommon among the Spaniards, and hence it arises that their history is so dry and doubtful till the time of Ferdinand and Isabella. We perceive, from what has been said, with what facility the very small number of persons who possessed the art of writing might impose by means of it, and how easy it has been to produce a belief in the most enormous absurdities.

There have been nations who have subjugated a considerable part of the world, and who yet have not been acquainted with the use of characters. We know that Genghis Khan conquered a part of Asia in the beginning of the thirteenth century; but it is not from him, nor from the Tartars, that we have derived that knowledge. Their history, written by the Chinese, and translated by Father Gaubil, states that these Tartars were at that time unacquainted with the art of writing.

This art was, unquestionably, not likely to be less unknown to the Scythian Ogus-kan, called by the Persians and Greeks

Madies, who conquered a part of Europe and Asia long before the reign of Cyrus. It is almost a certainty that at that time, out of a hundred nations, there were only two or three that employed characters. It is undoubtedly possible, that in an ancient world destroyed, mankind were acquainted with the art of writing and the other arts, but in our world they are all of recent date.

There remain monuments of another kind, which serve to prove merely the remote antiquity of certain nations, an antiquity preceding all known epochs, and all books; these are the prodigies of architecture, such as the pyramids and palaces of Egypt, which have resisted and wearied the power of time. Herodotus, who lived two thousand two hundred years ago, and who had seen them, was unable to learn from the Egyptian priests at what periods these structures were raised.

It is difficult to ascribe to the oldest of the pyramids an antiquity of less than four thousand years, and, it is necessary to consider, that those ostentatious piles, erected by monarchs, could not have been commenced till long after the establishment of cities. But, in order to build cities in a country every year inundated, it must always be recollected that it would have been previously necessary in this land of slime and mud, to lay the foundation upon piles, that they might thus be inaccessible to the inundation; it would have been necessary, even before taking this indispensable measure of precaution, and before the inhabitants could be in a state to engage in such important and even dangerous labors, that the people should have contrived

retreats, during the swelling of the Nile, between the two chains of rocks which exist on the right and left banks of the river. It would have been necessary that these collected multitudes should have instruments of tillage, and of architecture, a knowledge of architecture and surveying, regular laws, and an active police. All these things require a space of time absolutely prodigious. We see, every day, by the long details which relate even to those of our undertakings, which are most necessary and most diminutive, how difficult it is to execute works of magnitude, and that they not only require unwearied perseverance, but many generations animated by the same spirit.

However, whether we admit that one or two of those immense masses were erected by Menés, or Thaut, or Cheops, or Rameses, we shall not, in consequence, have the slightest further insight into the ancient history of Egypt. The language of that people is lost; and all we know in reference to the subject is that before the most ancient historians existed, there existed materials for writing ancient history.

SECTION II

As we already possess, I had almost said, twenty thousand works, the greater number of them extending to many volumes, on the subject, exclusively, of the history of France; and as, even a studious man, were he to live a hundred years, would find it impossible to read them, I think it a good thing to know where to stop. We are obliged to connect with the knowledge of our own country the history of our neighbors. We are still less permitted to remain ignorant of the Greeks and Romans, and their laws which are become ours; but, if to this laborious study we should resolve to add that of more remote antiquity, we should resemble the man who deserted Tacitus and Livy to study seriously the "Thousand and One Nights." All the origins of nations are evidently fables. The reason is that men must have lived long in society, and have learned to make bread and clothing (which would be matters of some difficulty) before they acquired the art of transmitting all their thoughts to posterity (a matter of greater difficulty still). The art of writing is certainly not more than six thousand years old, even among the Chinese; and, whatever may be the boast of the Chaldæans and Egyptians, it appears not at all likely that they were able to read and write earlier.

The history, therefore, of preceding periods, could be transmitted by memory alone; and we well know how the memory of past events changes from one generation to another.

The first histories were written only from the imagination. Not only did every people invent its own origin, but it invented also the origin of the whole world.

If we may believe Sanchoniathon, the origin of things was a thick air, which was rarified by the wind; hence sprang desire and love, and from the union of desire and love were formed animals. The stars were later productions, and intended merely to adorn the heavens, and to rejoice the sight of the animals upon earth.

The Knef of the Egyptians, their Oshiret and Ishet, which we call Osiris and Isis, are neither less ingenious nor ridiculous. The Greeks embellished all these fictions. Ovid collected them and ornamented them with the charms of the most beautiful poetry. What he says of a god who develops or disembroils chaos, and of the formation of man, is sublime.

Sanctius his animal, mentisque capacius altæ
Deerat adhuc, et quod dominari in cætera posset.
Natus homo est…

– OVID, Metam., i, v. 76.

A creature of a more exalted kind
Was wanting yet, and then was man designed;
Conscious or thought, of more capacious breast,
For empire formed, and fit to rule the rest.

– DRYDEN.

Pronaque cum spectent animalia cætera terram;
Os homini sublime dedit cœlumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.

METAM., i, v. 84.

Thus, while the mute creation downward bend
Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,
Man looks aloft, and with erected eyes
Beholds his own hereditary skies.

– DRYDEN.

Hesiod, and other writers who lived so long before, would have been very far from expressing themselves with this elegant sublimity. But, from the interesting moment of man's formation down to the era of the Olympiads, everything is plunged in profound obscurity.

Herodotus is present at the Olympic games, and, like an old woman to children, recites his narratives, or rather tales, to the assembled Greeks. He begins by saying that the Phœnicians sailed from the Red Sea into the Mediterranean; which, if true, must necessarily imply that they had doubled the Cape of Good Hope, and made the circuit of Africa.

Then comes the rape of Io; then the fable of Gyges and Candaules; then the wondrous stories of banditti, and that of the daughter of Cheops, king of Egypt, having required a hewn stone

from each of her many lovers, and obtained, in consequence, a number large enough to build one of the pyramids.

To this, add the oracles, prodigies, and frauds of priests, and you have the history of the human race.

The first periods of the Roman history appear to have been written by Herodotus; our conquerors and legislators knew no other way of counting their years as they passed away, than by driving nails into a wall by the hand of the sacred pontiff.

The great Romulus, the king of a village, is the son of the god Mars, and a recluse, who was proceeding to a well to draw water in a pitcher. He has a god for his father, a woman of loose manners for his mother, and a she-wolf for his nurse. A buckler falls from heaven expressly for Numa. The invaluable books of the Sibyls are found by accident. An augur, by divine permission, divides a large flint-stone with a razor. A vestal, with her mere girdle, draws into the water a large vessel that has been stranded. Castor and Pollux come down to fight for the Romans, and the marks of their horses' feet are imprinted on the stones. The transalpine Gauls advanced to pillage Rome; some relate that they were driven away by geese, others that they carried away with them much gold and silver; but it is probable that, at that time in Italy, geese were far more abundant than silver. We have imitated the first Roman historians, at least in their taste for fables. We have our oriflamme, our great standard, brought from heaven by an angel, and the holy phial by a pigeon; and, when to these we add the mantle of St. Martin, we feel not a little

formidable.

What would constitute useful history? That which should teach us our duties and our rights, without appearing to teach them.

It is often asked whether the fable of the sacrifice of Iphigenia is taken from the history of Jephthah; whether the deluge of Deucalion is invented in imitation of that of Noah; whether the adventure of Philemon and Baucis is copied from that of Lot and his wife. The Jews admit that they had no communication with strangers, that their books were unknown to the Greeks till the translation made by the order of Ptolemy. The Jews were, long before that period, money-brokers and usurers among the Greeks at Alexandria; but the Greeks never went to sell old clothes at Jerusalem. It is evident that no people imitated the Jews, and also that the Jews imitated or adopted many things from the Babylonians, the Egyptians, and the Greeks.

All Jewish antiquities are sacred in our estimation, notwithstanding the hatred and contempt in which we hold that people. We cannot, indeed, believe them by reason, but we bring ourselves under subjection to the Jews by faith. There are about fourscore systems in existence on the subject of their chronology, and a far greater number of ways of explaining the events recorded in their histories; we know not which is the true one, but we reserve our faith for it in store against the time when that true one shall be discovered.

We have so many things to believe in this sensible and

magnanimous people, that all our faith is exhausted by them, and we have none left for the prodigies with which the other nations abound. Rollin may go on repeating to us the oracles of Apollo, and the miraculous achievements of Semiramis; he may continue to transcribe all that has been narrated of the justice of those ancient Scythians who so frequently pillaged Africa, and occasionally ate men for their breakfast; yet sensible and well-educated people will still feel and express some degree of incredulity.

What I most admire in our modern compilers is the judgment and zeal with which they prove to us, that whatever happened in former ages, in the most extensive and powerful empires of the world, took place solely for the instruction of the inhabitants of Palestine. If the kings of Babylon, in the course of their conquests, overrun the territories of the Hebrew people, it is only to correct that people for their sins. If the monarch, who has been commonly named Cyrus, becomes master of Babylon, it is that he may grant permission to some captive Jews to return home. If Alexander conquers Darius, it is for the settlement of some Jew old-clothesmen at Alexandria. When the Romans join Syria to their vast dominions, and round their empire with the little district of Judæa, this is still with a view to teach a moral lesson to the Jews. The Arabs and the Turks appear upon the stage of the world solely for the correction of this amiable people. We must acknowledge that they have had an excellent education; never had any pupil so many preceptors. Such is the utility of history.

But what is still more instructive is the exact justice which the clergy have dealt out to all those sovereigns with whom they were dissatisfied. Observe with what impartial candor St. Gregory of Nazianzen judges the emperor Julian, the philosopher. He declares that that prince, who did not believe in the existence of the devil, held secret communication with that personage, and that, on a particular occasion, when the demons appeared to him under the most hideous forms, and in the midst of the most raging flames, he drove them away by making inadvertently the sign of the cross.

He denominates him madman and wretch; he asserts that Julian immolated young men and women every night in caves. Such is the description he gives of the most candid and clement of men, and who never exercised the slightest revenge against this same Gregory, notwithstanding the abuse and invectives with which he pursued him throughout his reign.

To apologize for the guilty is a happy way of justifying calumny against the innocent. Compensation is thus effected; and such compensation was amply afforded by St. Gregory. The emperor Constantius, Julian's uncle and predecessor, upon his accession to the throne, had massacred Julius, his mother's brother, and his two sons, all three of whom had been declared august; this was a system which he had adopted from his father. He afterwards procured the assassination of Gallus, Julian's brother. The cruelty which he thus displayed to his own family, he extended to the empire at large; but he was a man of prayer,

and, even at the decisive battle with Maxentius, he was praying to God in a neighboring church during the whole time in which the armies were engaged. Such was the man who was eulogized by Gregory; and, if such is the way in which the saints make us acquainted with the truth, what may we not expect from the profane, particularly when they are ignorant, superstitious, and irritable?

At the present day the study of history is occasionally applied to a purpose somewhat whimsical and absurd. Certain charters of the time of Dagobert are discovered and brought forward, the greater part of them of a somewhat suspicious character in point of genuineness, and ill-understood; and from these it is inferred, that customs, rights, and prerogatives, which subsisted then, should be revived now. I would recommend it to those who adopt this method of study and reasoning, to say to the ocean, "You formerly extended to Aigues-Mortes, Fréjus, Ravenna, and Ferrara. Return to them immediately."

SECTION III

Of the Certainty of History.

All certainty which does not consist in mathematical demonstration is nothing more than the highest probability; there is no other historical certainty.

When Marco Polo described the greatness and population of China, being the first, and for a time the only writer who had described them, he could not obtain credit. The Portuguese, who for ages afterwards had communication and commerce with that vast empire, began to render the description probable. It is now a matter of absolute certainty; of that certainty which arises from the unanimous deposition of a thousand witnesses or different nations, unopposed by the testimony of a single individual.

If merely two or three historians had described the adventure of King Charles XII. when he persisted in remaining in the territories of his benefactor, the sultan, in opposition to the orders of that monarch, and absolutely fought, with the few domestics that attended his person, against an army of janissaries and Tartars, I should have suspended my judgment about its truth; but, having spoken to many who actually witnessed the fact, and having never heard it called in question, I cannot possibly do otherwise than believe it; because, after all, although such conduct is neither wise nor common, there is nothing in it contradictory to the laws of nature, or the character of the hero.

That which is in opposition to the ordinary course of nature ought not to be believed, unless it is attested by persons evidently inspired by the divine mind, and whose inspiration, indeed, it is impossible to doubt. Hence we are justified in considering as a paradox the assertion made under the article on "Certainty," in the great "Encyclopædia," that we are as much bound to believe in the resuscitation of a dead man, if all Paris were to affirm it, as to believe all Paris when it states that we gained the battle of Fontenoy. It is clear that the evidence of all Paris to a thing improbable can never be equal to that evidence in favor of a probable one. These are the first principles of genuine logic. Such a dictionary as the one in question should be consecrated only to truth.

Uncertainty of History.

Periods of time are distinguished as fabulous and historical. But even in the historical times themselves it is necessary to distinguish truths from fables. I am not here speaking of fables, now universally admitted to be such. There is no question, for example, respecting the prodigies with which Livy has embellished, or rather defaced, his history. But with respect to events generally admitted, how many reasons exist for doubt!

Let it be recollected that the Roman republic was five hundred years without historians; that Livy himself deplores the loss of various public monuments or records, as almost all, he says, were destroyed in the burning of Rome: "*Pleraque interiere*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.