

## A NOVEL OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CENTURIES.

Whereas in classical antiquity poetry and the drama had attained an ideal state of perfection, the novel does not appear to have reached any development above mediocrity, and there are very few stories handed down to us from ancient times. This state of things continued into the Christian era, and considering the specimens we discover we need not be sorry that so little has been preserved. One of the fortunate survivors which Dr. Bernhard Pick has translated from the Greek is the story of "Joseph and Asenath." It dates originally from the fifth century or even earlier and was quite popular in its time.

It may serve us as a specimen of the taste prevailing among the early Christians, their love for visions, their admiration for pious penance, their joy in evidence of the grace of God to those who humble themselves and in the triumph of faith.

The literary merit of the story is poor, but we will naturally take an interest in the psychology of the age which produced it, the demands of the reading public and the supply with which the authors of those days satisfied them. From this point of view the story is more than curious, it is instructive and decidedly of historical value, and as such we offer it to our readers.

Those who have seen Mr. Louis Napoleon Parker's dramatic production of "The Story of Joseph" in its brilliant Oriental setting will find an additional interest in this early Christian romance on the same theme. Mr. Parker seems to have successfully braved the traditional prejudices of the public in utilizing one of the many possible dramatic themes among Biblical subjects which have hitherto been systematically avoided by our modern playwrights.

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CIVIC CLUBS IN FRANCE.

Those who have been following the relations between church and state in France will be interested to learn that republicans of all the opposition parties have come to the conclusion that not only is it not yet time to give up the struggle against the church and the reactionary forces under its control, but that on the contrary it is necessary to organize a more steady and methodical course of anti-clerical action. For this purpose they have founded a system of civic clubs (*Cercles civiques*), most important of which is the Cercle Berthelot at Paris, which with its headquarters at 49 Boulevard Saint-Michel serves as a connecting link to unite all similar associations. The president of this Parisian organization is M. André Berthelot, and its general secretary is M. Victor Charbonnel, who, it will be remembered, broke with the Catholic church when it failed to support his plans for a revival of the religious parliament at Paris.

In the opinion of the charter members of the Cercle Berthelot, these civic clubs should possess the following characteristics:

- (1) A permanent home where members can meet for social and business matters;
- (2) a reading room which would contain the daily papers, reviews, books and records;
- (3) regular meetings at stated intervals on definite days when members can become acquainted with each other;
- (4) efforts to estab-