

to be confronted with such nonsensical elucubrations, coming as they do, from the pen of a man who presumes to pass on for a scholar? Do you not see the harm and the gross injustice thus done to us?

Let those gentlemen, who through some reason or another, find fault with the teachings of the Catholic Church, apply themselves to a thorough study of the works both theological and philosophical of her eminent champions, instead of relying upon hearsay or second-hand references, and I am certain that much misunderstanding on either side will thereby be done away with. Please publish this and oblige

EUGENE, Oregon.

L. PRZYBYLSKI,  
Catholic Priest.

[The author of the note to which the Reverend Father Przybylski refers is neither a man nor a scholar, but the wife of a prominent Italian nobleman, Count Martinengo Cesaresco. She has lived all her married life in Italy, and has observed, not without pain, that the members of the Roman Catholic Church of her home are, as it seems to her, less considerate of the rights of dumb animals than Protestants. We have not the slightest doubt, however, that the ethics toward animals officially taught by the Catholic Church are the same as in Protestant Churches. But the Countess is most certainly right in her claim that if Roman Catholic authorities would emphasise more strongly the kind treatment of animals, it would have a great influence upon the population of the Roman Catholic countries.—*Ed.*]

### “THE CRITICAL, REFLECTIVE PERIOD.”

*To the Editor of The Open Court:*

In that very interesting work called *L'avenir de la science* which Renan wrote when he was a young man, and which the Vicomte de Voguë pronounced “*le grand livre de l'Écrivain*,” he declared that “the theory of the *primitive state of the human intellect*, so indispensable to the knowledge of the human intellect itself, is our *great discovery*, and has introduced thoroughly new data into philosophical science.”

Guyau, a young Frenchman who died before reaching his thirty-fourth birthday, but not before writing a very remarkable book, *The Non-Religion of the Future*, only confirmed his great predecessor's doctrine by saying with great emphasis: “Do we really need *voluntarily* to go back to the *state of mind of primitive peoples?*”

Dr. Caird, the present Master of Balliol College, Oxford, in the first of his opening series of Gifford Lectures in Glasgow University, began by saying that “a great part of the scientific and philosophical work of the last century had been the application of the idea of evolution to the organic world and to the various departments of human life.” “There is one aspect of this development,” he continued, “which is worthy of attention. . . This is the growing importance of reflective thought; in other words, the conscious reaction of mind upon the results of its own unconscious or obscurely conscious movements in the sphere of religion. Early religion does not trouble itself about its own justification; it does not even seek to make itself intelligible.”

The point that I am aiming at, and which these quotations clearly indicate, is, that the thought of all religions, and surely Christianity among the rest, is primitive, simple, spontaneous, naïve. Renan again says: “Only *semi-critical* intel-

lects resign themselves to admitting miracle in antiquity. Tales that would raise a smile if they were related as contemporary, pass muster in virtue of the enchantment lent by distance. It seems to be tacitly admitted that *primitive humanity* lived under natural laws *different from our own.*"

The two periods of the human understanding, that of the surroundings and *milieu* of early Christianity, and the dawn of the twentieth century of our era, differ *longo intervallo*. This is the *most reflective critical* epoch that the world has yet known. Emerson as long ago as 1841 said: "Would we be blind? Do we fear lest we should outsee nature and God, and drink truth dry? Everything *tilts* and *rocks*. Even the *scholar* is searched. Is he living in his memory?"

What the world is athirst for is a new and adequate definition of *Religion* and of the *Supernatural*.

Since the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859, and the vast erudition lavished upon the critical exegesis of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, the old primitive naïve statements do not satisfy us. The old supernaturalism of miraculous births, resurrections, and ascensions does not harmonise with the rest of our knowledge,—it is all so *incongruous*, so obsolete, so outworn,—in short, belongs to an entirely different and primitive period.

As the great French critic again declares: "In fact, the defect of the critical system of the supernaturalists is to judge all the periods of the human understanding by the same tests."

To whom then should we naturally turn for more light? To the scholars among the clergy. I was much struck recently with the concluding appeal of Bishop Potter in his address to the students of the University of Pennsylvania: 'And never more than now therefore\* does the land wait for scholars,—scholars who shall be thinkers and seers, too, eager to find the truth, willing to own and follow it when it is discovered, and then with fearless note to tell it out to all mankind.'

But have the clergy a real passion for truth? Do they come under Emerson's saying, "that he who reads all books can read any book"? The gentle Amiel said of them: "It is all a *parti-pris*, the *unknown* is taken as *known*, and all the rest proved from it." If you have a *supernatural revelation* of the most momentous truths, where is the opportunity for critical and historical research? You surely cannot bandy questions over the word of God!

Bacon said that "the unforced opinions of young men were the best materials for prophecy." Now I should like to put such a book as Mr. John M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology* into the hands of a young theological student. Mr. Robertson's thesis is to prove that "the legend of Christianity can be demonstrably shown to be a patchwork of pagan myths and rituals." This is the great and momentous question of the opening century: "Is Christianity a patchwork of pagan myths and rituals?" *Qu'en dit l'Abbé?*

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ATHERTON BLIGHT.

## BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF GEN. DELANEY SMYTHE. By Lt.-Col. W. H. Gardner, U. S. A., retired. The Abbey Press, publisher, 114 Fifth ave., New York.

Of the many works of fiction recently issued *The Curious Case of General Delaney Smythe* is quite unique. It is a medico-legal detective story. The plot