## SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals upon Current Topics-Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION. From the N. Y. Sun.

The celebrated linguist, Professor Max Muller, delivered last winter before the British Royal Institution a series of lectures on the Science of religion, which are now in the course of publication in various magazines, The learned Professor treats the subject with the same breadth and fulness, and the same richness of illustration, which rendered his lectures on language so interesting; but he seems to us to proceed, as do many other scientific men who have undertaken a similar

task, upon a radically unsound assumption. Professor Muller asserts, what is undoubtedly true, that the various forms of religion which have prevailed and do prevail upon the earth may be classified like languages; and, further, that there are family likenesses between certain religions and classes of religions and certain languages and groups of languages. Hence he infers that because language is of human invention and elaboration, religions are also of human origin, and he proceeds to discuss them accordingly. The theory that there was one primeval revelation to the ancestors of the human race. which has been corrupted and distorted into many forms he disputes, as having no better foundation than that which makes language to have been similarly revealed in a single primitive form, and afterwards broken up into the languages of the world. Without going so far as Mr. Baring Gould and ascribing religion to the secretive action of the cerebral glands, he none the less believes it to have been contrived out of an ingenious and poetical interpretation of natural phenomena. The idea of a supernatural revelation he scouts as entirely worthless in a scientific point of view, and more than hints that it rests only upon fraud and delusion.

It is not demonstrable by actual proof that without revelation mankind would have no conception of God, of the life after death, and of religious matters in general, because, as far back as history extends, and as widely as the explorations of modern travellers have extended, the world has at no time and in no locality been left without such a revelation more or less perfectly preserved. The oldest anthentic records in existence are those of the Jewish nation; and they are known to embody fragments of still more ancient writings. As to the sacred books of the Asiatics, they may or may not possess the antiquity assigned to them; but admitting them to be as much older than the Hebrew Scriptures as it is asserted they are, still they too professedly embody ideas which have not been invented by men, but which were transmitted from a higher source. The heathen who have no written books have still oral traditions of a supernatural revelation, and even the savages of America and Africa point to a time when their ancestors received instruction from supernatural beings. But so far as this universality of a belief in revelation proves anything, it proves that belief to be true. What is so generally credited is not likely to be the fabrication of interested de-

But further than this, observation teaches that the unassisted faculties of the human mind do not suggest the theory or the practices of religion. There never was a child who of himself discovered the existence of God and his relation to Him. In the few instances in which children have grown up like wild animals, away from instruction of all kinds, they have shown no traces of religious development; and in no case have savages, without the help of missionaries of some purer religion, made any improvement upon their hereditary superstitions. Whatever changes have occurred in their notions have been for the worse-from a more intelligent form of belief to one less so.

Putting the matter to our own individual experience, we shall find that nothing in this world-all theorists to the contrary notwithstanding-suggests the existence of any other world or any other class of beings or state of existence than those of which our senses inform us. We might go on forever learning the properties of matter and the wonderful uses to which natural force can be put; but no experiments of science or art would ever prove to as that there is a God. In fact, the most learned natural philosophers have often been the sturdiest atheists. No amount of acquaintance with the wonders of creation suggests of itself the thought of a creator. Given the conception, indeed, and science can abundantly corroborate and illustrate it. After Columbus had shown how to make the egg stand on its end, all who saw the performance could repeat it. So, in the light that revelation gives, the book of nature tells of God; but without that light its pages are devoid of any truth higher than their own phenomena.

It is true that the common notion that one single revelation was made to men once for all, and that all religions have been derived from that, may be erroneous. It would be presumptuous in any mortal to undertake to limit the operations of Providence to so narrow a method of manifestation. In showing the unity of design in the various types of revelation which have been made to mankind, Prof. Muller's labors may prove valuable. If the same influences of mini and circumstances which have affected the development of language can be proved to have affected that of religion, it will, so far from destroying our sense of obligation to the Divine Being, increase it. But to attempt to make out that He has never interposed by revelation to lift His children out of their mental darkness, is to impeach His benevolence in a manner offensive to the devout and unsatisfactory to the truly rational inquirer. It is at once more edifying and more in accordance with reason to believe that He who made us has also communicated to us information concerning Himself and His relations to us, than to conjecture that He has abandoned us to the exercise of our own feeble powers.

THE COAL STRIKES ONCE MORE.

From the N. Y. Times. The strikes in the Pennsylvania coal regions are at length concluded, and thas terminates a struggle in the course of which public and private interests have alike been disregarded. Not that any firm assurance can be felt that so reckless and mischievous a contest may not be reopened at any future day. All that can be said is that, for the present, miners and operators are agreed upon a "basis," and that work has recommenced-to be again suspended probably, as it has been annually for several years, when it suits miners or operators to "regulate the trade." With the details of the controversy, as between these parties, the public has little concern. The elaborate statements put forth by each are generally incomprehensible.

form is that both are grossly to blame.

The case may be briefly recapitulated. The supply of coal to New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey is a monopoly, composed of members having minor differ-ences, but who are substantially agreed in their method of business. They resist the natural influences which should always control the price of any article of prime necessity, by creating artificial conditions for that purpose. A large production tends, of course, to lower prices, if it is placed within the reach of consumers: at certain periods, therefore, it is kept out of their reach, and whatever fall may have taken place is followed by a rise, to perhaps even a higher figure than before. The miners watch the process, and presently demand a share in the resulting profits. This is refused, and a strike ensues. The operators are content that the men should be idle, seeing that the supply on hand is equal to any possible demand, and that while they are spared for a time the payment of wages, the market rates are sustained and even appreciated by the "new trouble in the coal regions." When it is desirable to resume production, the operators give way, a "basis" is agreed upon, and the miners go to work. The sinister character of this manceuvre will strike every observer. But there is a still worse feature of the case, as is broadly asserted by well-informed persons. These say that the miners strikes are not the result of spontaneous action on the part of the men, but are engineered by the leaders of the trades unions in the interest of the operators. The course of these strikes certainly does not tend to disprove this allegation, and, if its truth be assumed, we see now a mass of ignorant and hard-worked men are used as tools in the hands of greedy and unscrupulous managers. The public, too, will understand the repeated panies which are attempted, not in the coal market, which knows better, but among consumers, who are expected to rush for supplies for fear of still higher prices.

Meanwhile, the injury done to trade by these proceedings is incalculable, and the poor suffer, also, to an extent little suspected by the more fortunate classes. There was a remedy which Congress might have applied and did not, failing thus in a clear and imperative duty. Had the tax on bituminous coal been removed, the monopolists must have been driven to fair dealing. As it is, consumers can avoid unnecessary purchases throughout the year. When once the demand is thus distributed, as it is distributed in other countries, no violent fluctuations of price will be possible, and the ingenious device of "regulating the market" must come to an end.

GOVERNOR HOFFMAN AND REAL. From the N. Y. World.

Of the unfortunate man who on Friday suffered the last extremity of the law in this city it is as needless as it would be repulsive to speak harshly now. But of a letter published in his name, and called his "last appeal," it is needful that some certain words of truth be briefly and sharply spoken. This letter, with which Real himself had doubtless no more to do than with the building of the gallows upon which he perished, was professedly a final and solemn recitation of the reasons by which Real believed the Executive of the State to have been induced to refuse to commute his sentence. This it professed to be; and if it had been what it professed to be it would have been a melancholy and indecent exhibition. But it was not what it professed to be. It was, in fact, a bitter and malignant attack upon the personal and political character of Governor Hoffman. It charged upon the Governor the incredible cruelty and baseness of sacrificing a fellow-creature's life and violating his official oath to punish alleged political derelic-

tions against his own ambition. Had such an assault as this upon the name and fame of a public man been made in the heat of a political conflict upon the stump. it would have been justly regarded as an aboutinable abuse of the freedom of speech. What shall be said of it when the lips of a dying man are used by its author to utter it on the very brink of his grave? It cannot be pleaded that this thing was done with even the faintest hope of saving Real's life at the eleventh hour. It was simply a violation of all that is most sacred in death for the gratification of all that is meanest in life. It is pleasant, though we should be ashamed to call it surprising, to see that this outrage calls forth, even from the most uncompromising opponents of Governor Hoffman and of the Democratic party, words of just and indignant rebuke. The Evening Post utters, we are sure, the sentiments of all honorable and law-abiding radicals when, to use its own language, it expresses, "in the cause of honesty and honorable political discussion, what every fair-minded man must feel. detestation for such an attempt to convert the just execution of an assassin into a political weapon against the officers who have vindicated the law in his case."

This journal did not hesitate, while the case of Real was under final consideration by Governor Hoffman, to urge sundry reasons which, as it seemed to us, might properly move the Executive not to remit, but to modify the punishment of that criminal. We did this because it seemed to us that there still lingered in his case some faint doubts as to the real measure of his guilt, and because it was obviously fair and humane, if such doubts there were, that he should receive the benefit of them. But the duty of weighing these reasons rested, in the last resort, with Governor Hoffman, as upon him was imposed by his high office the inexpressibly painful and trying responsibility of acting when those reasons had been fully weighed. His decision was gravely, patiently, and loyally made; and, once made, it was carried out with a courage and steadfastness by which, once more to quote the well-merited tribute of the Evening Post, the Governor has "earned the thanks of every law-respecting citizen of New York, irrespective of parties.

THE CITY CENSUS.

From the N. Y. Tribune. We have census returns from 118 enumeration districts of this city, showing a population of 300,800. The average is 2549 to a district, and there are 199 districts yet to come in. It is not probable that they will materially vary from the figures already at hand; so we must be content with about the same population as in 1860-814,000. The World is crying out against the census as a fraud, and intimates that the population is vastly larger than the returns show.

It may suit the purposes of the World to insist upon an enormous annual increase of population, but it is not true, and the editor of that journal knows, or ought to know it. There is one statistician who cannot be fooled with bogus babies or repeating voters, and that is Death. The death rate is a sure indication of the number of people. Now the whole number of deaths in New York in 1855 was 23,402; in 1860 it was 22,710; in 1865, 24,843, and in 1869, 24,601. This is enough to show that the resident population

and the only conclusion that the public can | that the census of 1860 was too high; and | plating and meditating about as the worst that the figures now coming in will greatly disappoint those who look for a million or

more of people on Manhattan Island. The outery of the Democrats about the un-fairness of the census is simply without foun-dation. It is a cardinal doctrine of their party that nothing can be honestly done except by themselves, and that everything they do must be right. The one census of this city most glaringly incorrect was done under Buchanam's administration by the once famous Captain of the Empire Club. We are sure that the present officers are honestly trying to do right. That the final report will show the notorious double and treble voting done by the Democracy (to which the editor of the World has borne personal testimony) is as clear as daylight. Hence the outery about radical efforts to show a small aggregate. It won't do: we shall have a better and more complete enumeration this year than any one yet teken.

SMITH AND HIS EAR.

From the N. Y. World. Smith, J. W., and Smith, W. T., are too near of a name as well as too near of a trade to agree. One is a judge and the other a general-no matter which is which, for both are Smiths and both are radicals-and they live in Tennessee. The general is a member of Congress. The judge thinks he ought to be a member too. So, not being able to compass the end of this laudable ambition, he consoled himself by biting off the end of a member of the member's person. He selected the right ear, probably as the more useless of the two ears which we suppose the general to have possessed. For it is an ancient superstition that when one is well spoken of, his right ear admonishes him of the agreeable fact by "barning:" and who upon earth would ever think of speaking well of Smith, J. W., general, and radical member of Congress?

For all this, the judge who has shown his teeth in this way has taken a larger bite than he intended, and may expect to be bitten badly in his turn. If there be validity in the precedent of Porter (renominated now because an Irishman kicked him), Judge Smith has bitten the ear of the nation, or at least of "the loyal North." He will get off easily if he be not set up, like Puritan Pryane, in the pillory, and have not his ears or a part of his ears sheared off close to his head. We hope they are long enough to bear the operation.

SOME OF THE CAUSES OF THE WAR. From the N. Y. Nation.

In his "Idee Napoleonienne," Louis Napoleon quotes from his favorite history of the First Empire, Bignon's, the following: -"One day people will ask, Why did Napoleon, in the last six years of his reign, show himself so pitiless towards Prussia? The reason is: Prussia was the power that harmed him most, for she compelled him to fight and destroy her, while his desire was to extend, to strengthen, and to aggrandize her." We do not know whether the author of the "Idee Napoleonienne," who has now with so much vehemence drawn the sword against Prussia -old, infirm, and generally passionless as he is-has either the desire or the ability to treat her pitilessly and to destroy her; but, granting Bignon's view to be correct, we cannot fail to notice the analogy between the Prussian wars of the two imperial reigns arising from the fact that Napoleon III, too, sees himself compelled to fight Prussia after some endeavors "to extend, to strengthen, and to aggrandize her."

The object of Napoleon I in giving Hanover to Prussia, after Austerlitz, was, as Bignon expresses it, "to ensure, by her aid, the immobility of Russia and Austria, to give to the Continental system an irresistible development, and thus to force England to make peace." Besides, Napoleon received some territorial compensations for what he took from the King of England and gave to Prussia. The object of Napoleon III in conspiring with Bismarck for the aggrandizement of Prussia-by the absorption, among other territories, of the same Hanover, as chiefly required for her consolidation-was to bring about a final disruption of Germany, which would render her powerless to resist the natural expansion of France-as the French call Cisrhenan conquests—whether at the expense of Belgium or of Prussia herself. should a protracted war have crippled her resources equally with those of Austria. And, low though our opinion be of the unselfishness of the living Napoleon, we cannot refrain from acknowledging that his intentions concerning Prussia were more sincere than those of the great conqueror. For the latter aimed at universal empire over Europe, and could therefore tolerate no respectable power besides his own, while the former would be fully satisfied to be acknowledged mightiest among

the mighty. Prussia compelled Napoleon I to fight her by refusing to be his abject slave. She has compelled Napoleon III to fight her by her victory at Sadowa. This victory, by its suddenness, has frustrated the schemes of French expansion, and made Prussia almost the equal of France in power. It has eclipsed Sevastopol, Magenta, and Solferino-which were the dearly-bought compensations in gloire for endless sacrifices of liberte-and partly effaced even the remembrances of Jena and Wagram. It has aroused the vanity of the French to a degree which makes them both restless and restive. The trophies of Miltiades will not allow Themistocles to sleep: from the day of Sadowa France has enjoyed no rest. She has actually begun to doubt whether she is, after all, la grande nation. A great revolution and great victories long ago procured her that glorious title; she sees it now rapidly becoming vain-glorious merely. She must have new victories or else a new revolution. Napoleon has not been slow in comprehending the changed situation, the changed temper of France. And where revolution or war is the alternative, he cannot hesitate in his choice. While playing or struggling with an incipient revolution, he has prepared for war—and Europe will be drenched in blood. It is idle to speculate how far, in throwing down the gauntlet to the rival of France, he is actuated by motives of personal interest, looking to the preservation of his dynasty, and how far by feelings inspired by the interests of the nation whose ruler he is. Whether equally imperative or not, regard for the safety of his throne and regard for "the honor of France" command him to fight.

Among the personal considerations looking to the preservation of both throne and fame, we may mention the advantage, so obvious under the actual circumstances of the Second Empire, of breaking by a powerful series of warlike deeds the chain of historical remembrances now uppermost in the mind of the French people. The seventeen or eighteen years of the personal rule of Napoleon, beginning with the coup detat of December 2, 1851, form a connected period of usurpation and hypocrisy, preceded by three years of wire-pulling and presidential betrayal of trust. This period is that which the generotion that knew the reign of Louis Philippe and the of the city has been comparatively stationary. Revolution of 1848 is constantly contem-

part of their country's history in this cen-tury; as a long-stretched inglorious present to which the late imperial concessions, crowned by a plebiscitum of a strangely dubious character, seem to form a continua-tion rather than a concluding and reconciling epilogue. Nothing would be more apt to impress upon the recent constitutional change in France the character of such an epilogue than the suddenly following opening of a new series of events, sufficiently dramatic and heroically tragic to strike the imagination of the people with the idea of entirely novel, grand performances, with the impression of a new era opening in the history of their country. Should speedy victory perch upon the imperial eagles, the new era would be hailed, as such, with all the rapture of national vanity; should a long war with varying success ensue, the multiplicity and intensity of the new impressions would the more easily cast the late past into comparative oblivion. In either case, Napoleon would appear in the new light of a champion of France in a grand contest with an envied rival.

Nor have the provocations to hostility, on the part of Prussia, been slight in the eyes of Napoleon. Not only has she dered to conquer beyond all measure compatible with "the henor of France"; not only has she used and abused her victory exclusively for her own benefit and without any regard to the claims and remonstrances of the monarch who at first aided her by his counsel and connivance; but she has also crossed and baffled some of his most favorite schemes in an almost atrocious way. It was he who proclaimed himself the protector and regenerator of the decayed Latin race, from the Pontus to the Pacific. It was he who brought about the union of Moldavia and Wallachia in the shape of an all but independent Roumania. It was he who worked with Cavour and fought with Garibaldi for the freedom of Italy, "from the Alps to the Adriatic." It was he who encouraged O'Donnell to revive the ancient glory of Spain on the soil of the Moors and to restore her sway in the Antilles. It was he who erected and defended, as a shield of the Latin race against the Anglo-Saxon, the imperial throne of Maximilian in Mexico. Surely it was a great dream, this universal Latin protectorate of France. And how has it vanished? Excepting Mexico, where it ended in a tragedy, Prussia has turned it into a mockery everywhere. She has placed a prince of her royal house, Charles of Hohenzollern, on the throne of Roumania. She has conqueredat Sadowa-the Italian quadrilateral of fortresses, which her arming in 1859 prevented Napoleon from assaulting, and has surrendered it and Venice to Italy-through his own hands. And now she has arranged to set another Hohenzollern prince on the throne even of Spain. Are not all these provocations, put together, too destructive of the prestige, too insulting to the pride of a Napoleon to be submitted to calmiy, to be borne without an attempt at revenge? We presume they have weighed heavily in the scales in which the Emperor of the French lately weighed peace or war.

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