NEW PUBLICATIONS.

"An Historical Sketch of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church. By Henry C. Lea. Philadelphia. J. B. Lippincott & Co., pp. 607. Philadelphia. J. B. Lippincott & Co., pp. 607. If it is gratifying to our local pride that the heroic men of Philadelphia literary character of unimpeachable integrity, it is not less so that many ghostly give their leisure hours, in the quiet of their libraries, to researches in philosophy, science and history. We question whether in any community in our land there can be found among business men—men actively engaged in mercantile pursuits, more of ability to procure researches in the abstract sciences or in the recondite questions and phenomena of history, and more of readiness to pursue them, than in this city.

The author of this volume has shown in this and in a previous publication that he has taken in hours of leisure, and has here built up for himself a monument which will hand down his name and talents to future admiring generations. His work must ever remain a standard authority upon the subject of which it treats.

Mr. Lea is a Philadelphia by birth, and, we believe, by education. He is a well-known publisher of this city, the contributions from whose press are familiar to all readers whose memories reach back over the past quarter of a century. With business talents of the highest order, he has singularly illustrated the position that business men have ample opportunities for literary improvement, if they choose to avail themselves of them. His gifted mind is one that would make itself felt in any department of literary research. His tastes incline to history; and, selecting one subject, his practice is to follow it out to its utmost length, and, gathering around it from his richly garnered treasures a wealth of learning, he throws over the whole a romantic interest which captivates the reader.

In the lapse of centuries there must be, always, certain great ideas which, cropping out again and again, claim and command the consciences—now expressed by the claims of some immediately pressing question, and now coming forward again to demand a candid consideration, and a thorough settlement. In a former work, recently issued—"Superstition and Force"—of which we hope, in a little while, to give a more extended notice, Mr. Lea has brought forward a subject which every reader of history has noticed as curious, but which few have cared to trace back to surround with the weird romance with which the author has so charmingly invested it. He does not disdain the romantic, though he never goes out of his way to seek it; but, rather, he seems to delight among the historic treasures of olden times, his chastened fancy and matured judgment clothing the dry details of history with the interest of fiction. We know of no author in England or America who could throw so much of interest around the subject of "Superstition and Force," and we know of but one who could successfully compete with him in the subject matter of this work now before us. If the Rev. Dean Milman has beautifully shown how much that is weird-like can be garnered from the dim past of "Latin Christianity," Mr. Lea has shown how much of instructive interest can be harvested from a single portion of the field. Those who have read Milman's "Latin Christianity" will remember how, through all his work, sacerdotal celibacy continually comes up. The work, we have, in fact, become identified; and, taking the latter as his theme, Mr. Lea has discovered upon the fruitful soil, which he has cultivated, a crop of fruit, which, crop, as it may, he has garnered in the volume before us has shown how deeply instructive one topic thoroughly pursued may be made. Mr. Lea modestly in his style but little of the effervescent brilliancy of Milman. He has, what is of more value, a solidity of thought and a quiet power of language which charm while they rivet the attention. With none of the ponderous and stately stepping of Gibbon—of whom, nevertheless, he occasionally reminds us—and with none of the sparkling antithesis of Macaulay, he gives us in language at once beautiful, perspicuous and chaste, a picturesque view of the single field over which he has chosen to range.

The work before us on "Sacerdotal Celibacy" is not written in the interests of the Church of Rome. It is written in reference to, as an impartial history of celibacy in the priesthood, from the earliest dates; and it refers to the church of Rome at all only because that Church has made herself the most thorough exponent of the good and of the more abominable evil of celibacy. The effect, from about years of fierce contest, made celibacy among her clergy an absolute law, and, in any way devoted to the service of the ministry, must be celibates. To her history, therefore, the student naturally turns to discover the results of a system which is so fiercely antagonistic to one of the strongest impulses of sentient nature. All that is to be learned on this subject is to be found within this volume, where are traced the rise and progress of the system, the conflicts and its triumphs, and the results which have flowed from its practical operation. We cordially commend the work to the thoughtful study of the clergy and students of divinity of all denominations. So impartial is the historian, that Protestant and Catholic alike can find nothing here to object to in this treatment of a question which has usually excited much bitterness between sects.

It is difficult to make selections from the work without appearing to do injustice to the portions equally deserving of notice. We shall not give even an outline of the work, but shall content ourselves, and ask our readers to be content, with some brief comments upon points to which history has given conspicuous interest, although sometimes now little of justice and consideration can render to the author.

1. Christianity is neither the parent nor the patron of celibacy. It has a heathen origin, and was adopted in later years by a small and obscure sect of the Jews, and never attained any where to great importance. Christianity, benignant as was its founder, hallows as He did the innocent and the social instincts of our nature. Its mission was not to interfere with, much less to suppress them. It recognizes the existence of passions which constitute indulgence can be only beneficial to their possessor and to the world, and throwing over them its sanction, seeks to infuse into them a portion of its own elevating and sanctifying spirit. The Son of God, Himself a celibate, sanctioned marriage by both word and deed. He restored it to its primal dignity when He urged its original institution as indicating unmistakably the duties of husband and one wife, and He bestowed upon it the benediction of His presence, when He participated in the festivities of Cana, and even wrought a miracle but the power of God to prevent throw a shadow upon their innocent enjoyment. It is remarkable too, as indicating His will, that He never alluded to celibacy on any occasion, save once, when the question was plainly put to Him, and then his answer gave not the slightest countenance to the practice. The inquiry had arisen from that answer an argument however weak in favor of celibacy. And when, in closing His apostles, the man who were to be the builders of His church, and who, as His representatives, were to give to the age the impress which He authorized them to transmit, He chose them married and the unmarried, it certainly gave a very forced construction that He intended Apostolic celibacy upon His ministry. The Church, as it is well known, claims St. Peter as her founder. Scripture, however, has preserved the sacred tradition, and, in the Church, and through the wives, but works were powerless before the pressing urgency of nature's laws. The contest was not confined to the church of Rome. It was maintained throughout the whole church. But it was more vigorously prosecuted in the Church of Rome than in any other; and it required centuries before the power of that church was able to enforce a compliance with the unnatural as that implied in a forced celibacy. The history of that church is full with instructive lessons on the subject. Nature, in spite of human nature in a class cannot be crushed or suppressed without injury to the whole structure of society; and there are no more instructive pages of history than those which inform us that which communities, distinguished for their exemplary purity, that their priesthood should be married, law or no law, and those which record the extreme measures which had to be adopted in order to restore various monasteries and nunneries from licentiousness to purity.

It is a sad page in the history of Hildebrand to the Papacy. A. D. 1073, that celibacy among the clergy became the law in the Church of Rome. His ingenious will, fearless courage, and indomitable energy accomplished what Popes and councils combined had hitherto been unable to effect. From that day enforced celibacy for the clergy has been the rule. It reaches beyond the priesthood. The word sacerdotal, as used in regard to the ministry of that church, is somewhat comprehensive. It includes off orders of the ministry. The functions of a priest which are fiercely antagonistic to one of the strongest impulses of sentient nature. All that is to be learned on this subject is to be found within this volume, where are traced the rise and progress of the system, the conflicts and its triumphs, and the results which have flowed from its practical operation. We cordially commend the work to the thoughtful study of the clergy and students of divinity of all denominations. So impartial is the historian, that Protestant and Catholic alike can find nothing here to object to in this treatment of a question which has usually excited much bitterness between sects.

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