(From the Atlantic Monthly for January.)

THE CROWN OF THE SNOW-LINE.

BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

Slow toiling upward from the misty valley,
I leave the bright enamelled zones of June,
To where the pine-tree's sombre mantle covers
Their lingering sweetness load the morning gale;
Few are the slender flowerets, scentless, pale,
That on their lose-dad stems all trembling blow
Along the margin of unmelting snow;
Yet with unaccustomed voice thy verge I hail,
White realm of peace! Lo, yonder the flowering line;
Welcome thy frozen domes, thy rocky spires!
Over these undimmed the moon-girt planets shine,
On thy majestic altars fade the fires
That flinging the air with smoke of vain desires,
And all the unclouded blue of heaven is thine!

THE CREAM OF THE NEW BOOKS.

Mr. Lea's New Studies in Church History. Our lesson to-day will be from the leaves of the new work by Mr. Henry C. Lea, the celebrated scholar, and historian of Sacerdotal Celibacy, whose rank is at least ahigh in the foreign centres as his unsullied literature is here. The book arrives with the press of ephemeral publications intended to catch the eye of holiday purchasers, and we shall reserve to ourselves the privilege of approaching it again when there will be more time for a respectful examination. But we do not like to deprive our readers of some tastes at least of the feast in its freshness.

Mr. Lea's researches comprise the following problems: Rise of the Temporal Power, Benefit of Clergy, and Excommunication, massed under the modest title of "Studies." After explaining that the first essay is a development of one published in the *North American Review*, and gracefully apologizing to the Church for seeming to dwell too exclusively in the region of stricture and accusation, Mr. Lea embarks in the broad current of study to which he has addressed himself.

In detailing the steps by which the Papacy clambered to the seat of temporal power, our author comes to the age of Rabelais, and, in quoting that satirist's account of "How by virtue of the Decretals gold is subtly withdrawn from France to Rome," justifies that old wit by the following rich mass of facts appended in a foot-note:

SENALITY OF THE PAPAL COURT.

All the incidental prerogatives acquired by the Roman curia were thus turned into coin. Few years had elapsed ere a bastard reputation, than Calixtus II., and yet the history, recorded by an eye-witness, of the negotiations for the elevation of Conpodibella to the archiepiscopate, reveal a cyclatism of venality almost incredible. Diego Gelmirez, who sought this promotion for his sec, opened negotiations by sending 200 ounces of gold taken from the tablets of his altars. This was stolen on the road, when he sent one hundred more, of which only 50 reached Calixtus. The rest had been forwarded a casket of gold, weighing nine marks, and a large amount of coin, to Calixtus, who had meanwhile succeeded to Gelasius II. His cautious envoy, finding Calixtus hesitate, only gave him twenty ounces and reserved the rest. Finally Calixtus acceded, on condition of receiving the reserved funds with 200 marks of silver in addition. To obtain this, the church of Compostella was stripped of its ornaments, and only safely it was confided to some ecclesiastics proceeding to the Crusade, each man receiving absolution for a year's pleasure in carrying of gold that he should succeed in carrying safely. The money was received, when Calixtus complained that his gold casket was partly silver, and demanded 20 ounces of gold to make it good; his chamberlain, however, declared that of 200 ounces of gold received sem-fourth had proved to be base metal, so that the exhausted archbishop in expectation was obliged to furnish 70 ounces more. The minister of temporal affairs of swindling stymo replates it all with the utmost composure, as a matter of course, only interrupting his narrative occasionally to express his admiration of the virtues of the Popes who had raised their sphere privileges, and of the Archbishop who was so liberal in his bribes. The naive account given by Guibert de Nogent of the conflagration by Paschal II. of Gaudri's election to the see of Laon, in 1107, is an equally instructive illustration of the barefaced plundering and venality with which the Papal Court exploited the power it had obtained over the Episcopal office. Perhaps the most significant illustration of the money value of the Papal Court, however, is the fact that among the documents connected with the proposed canonization of Henry VI., of England, towards the close of the fifteenth century, is a memorandum of the expenses connected with obtaining a place in the calender of saints, amounting in all to 783 ducats—the first item being a fee to the Pope himself of 100 ducats!

The shameful immunities in which the clergy of the fourteenth century wallowed and battened by the mere privilege of the shaved scalp, are thus alluded to in the essay on Benefits of the Clergy:

ADVANTAGES OF THE TONSURE.

How useful an official the barber sometimes was, and how desperately the miserable wretches clung to the protecting influence of the Church, is shown by a case occurring in January, 1200, when Thurevin de Saint-Lun was brought before Châtelet on a charge of theft. So constant was the claim of clergy that the first proceeding with the prisoner was to examine him minutely for the tonsure or other signs of clericature, and none were found on Fleuret. To prevent collusion, he was shut up alone for the night and next morning, in the presence of the court, his bodily pleaded clergy and exhibited a tonsured head. The barber was forthwith summoned, and after a careful inspection of the scalp declared that the tonsure was not produced by shaving, but by pulling out the hairs one by one—the ingenious expedient of the prisoner, during the night, to simulate clergy. Unfortunately for the accused of this device, he had admitted to the jailer that he was betrothed in marriage to a woman of the order of Comtesse. The court therefore had no hesitation in pronouncing him a "pure bigamus;" as a married man he had no right to the privilege of clergy, so his pretended tonsure was promptly destroyed by shaving, and he was tried and executed.

A still more perplexing case for the tonsorial expert occurred in October of the same year, when Johan Jourge, a jeweler, was accused by an accomplice of coining. This pleaded clergy, though he confessed to—have been married for twelve years, and the condition of his scalp seems to have puzzled the official barber, for a jury of thirteen of his brethren was summoned to examine the prisoner's head. Under oath they reported that after full investigation they found him not to be tonsured, though he had several bald spots. The court decided that as a married man and untonsured he had no right to clergy, and, as the crime was a heinous one and speedy justice was required, so within two days of his appearance he was convicted, sentenced, and publicly boiled to death.

In the early centuries of our era, when the Church was confronted against the barbarians and struggled for supremacy with a strong yet ignorant and superstitious lake power, it brought to its keenest edge the ingenious weapon of excommunication. But outside the hordes who confessed to the authority of the Church there were do dowright heathen barbarians. How the religion of the day acted upon the ignorance of those wild men is suggested by the following anecdotes:

THE CURSED AND THE BARBARIANS.

"It is interesting to observe that in Italy, where the barbarian oppressor with whom the priest had to deal was generally a heathen or an Arian, and therefore incapable of excommunication, the vengeance of heaven generally overtakes the spoiler either by direct interposition or through a simple excavation. When, for instance, Dardia the Goth overran Sanninum, some of his troops chanced to overstep a Benedictine, prior of the monastery of Pedil, throw him from his horse, and took his animal with them. The holy man not only offered no resistance, but even handed them his whip with which to drive the beast, and recalmed his interrupted prayer. The river Pescarino crossed their road at a short distance, and when they reached the ford they found that no amount of spurring and beating could force their horses to enter the water. Exhausted by fruitless efforts, they remembered the priest whom they had just despoiled, and taking his horse back, found him still absorbed in prayer. He refused to receive the horse again, and they were obliged to lift him by force upon the animal's back, after which they had no difficulty in fording the river. A more pregnant warning was given at Todi, under the episcopate of Fortunatus, when some Goths attempted to carry off their way to Ravenna rejoiled the hospitality shown them by seizing two boys from a farm of the church of Todi. Fortunatus sent for the leader and offered to redeem them at a liberal price, but was refused, when he quietly assured the barbarian that it would prove the worse for him. Disregarding the threat, the Goths set out with their captives, but before they had cleared the town, while passing the church of St. Zenon, the horse of the chief fell, and his rider was disabled with a broken thigh. Recognizing the source of his mishap to be the curse of the bishop, at once rent him the two boys with a prayer for absolution