IS CHRISTIANITY A FAILURE?

Wounded in the House of Its Friends.

CHURCH MILLINERY CONDEMNED.

A So-Called Finality in a Moving World.

SOME STRANGE TESTS PROPOSED.

CHURCH MILLINERY, ADORNMENTS AND PROCESSIONS CONDEMNED BY LADY BLANCHE MURPHY.

One of the best things written during this controversy on the failure of Christianity is a communication from North Conway, N. H., written by Lady Blanche Murphy for a Catholic paper, but which the editor feared to publish after having put it in type. She therefore sends it to the HERALD. It discusses "church millinery" and adornments with a pointed pen. She denies the plea of poverty so frequently put forth by Catholics and by others for them when they want to shirk some duty and responsibility, and shows that Catholics spend more money on gaudy adornments, processions, &c., than would be needed to carry on the legitimate work of the Church at any time or in any place.

In most Episcopalian churches ecclesiastical taste has been so well cultivated by those in charge of the details of ornamentation that these churches present almost the ideal of a Catholic church. A very few additions would be needed to fit them for Catholic worship. With Catholics, on the contrary, in ninety-nine churches out of a hundred, there is no difference between the flower vases, the candlesticks, the carpets used in the sanctuary and those with which they are familiar in the parlor. The statues and images used in the majority of their churches are hardly one step removed from toys on a large scale. The trappings of the altar are like those of a lady's toilet table, those of the Blessed Virgin's altar in May, the "sepulchre" on Holy Thursday, and the high altar during the Forty Hours' Devotion especially. There is a painful irreverence and unfitness in such displays.

Rightly performed, says this writer, nothing is more solemn and grave than Catholic ceremonial, and nothing is more easy to dwarf and travesty by fancy decoration and fancy music. The very means ignorantly used to enhance the beauty of their ceremonies are those that rob them of their significance, and of their impressiveness. What, for instance, can be less ecclesiastical than the presence in a procession of a number of girls dressed in ballroom fashion, with wreaths of artificial flowers and colored ribbons? The ceremony becomes a show. There are some churches in England where no female is ever allowed to take part in a procession, and no layman, unless wearing a cassock and surplice. It may be argued that these canons of taste are arbitrary, and these distinctions too subtle; that the object of the Church is to attract outsiders, &c. Even on such low ground as this, there is much to be said against the particular mode of attraction used. To attract is not to pander; and these processional shows, and many similar devices, are a mere pandering to a sensational and unhealthy public taste.

The Church should draw people to her by the gravity of her doctrine, the firm moral support she gives in time of temptation, the trust in God and freedom from earthly solicitude which should mark her children, not by theatrical tricks and showy devices. Above all there should be no shams. If the church is of wood do not paint it to look like stone. And do not make candlesticks of wood on the altar simulate metal, nor put inferior candles in the place of pure wax. Most altars are of wood, painted to imitate white marble, and stuck over with moulded projections and bosses to represent carving. If an altar has to be made of wood, for lack of money to make it of stone or marble, why not put the sum squandered on the subsequent painting and flimsy ornamentation into solid walnut, oak, even chestnut, cherry or pine—anything that is real? Wood is quite as beautiful in its way as stone, alabaster or marble. A table shaped altar is very beautiful, and involves less material than the ordinary panelled kind. Our correspondent gives some prices of vestments here and in England, showing that priests in America pay for these things at least three times as much as are paid in England for them. The present style of church millinery our correspondent says is dangerous, as well as inappropriate. Every one knows how often a church is in danger of fire, especially on the festival days, when an extra display of muslin and tinsel is made. The preventive arrangements are more imperfect in churches even than they are in theatres, so that the risk to the congregation in case of fire and the inevitable consequence (a panic) is very serious.

CHRISTIANITY LOST IN THE CONFLICTS OF CREEDS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—

The greater number of the answers to this very grave question which have appeared from time to time in the HERALD have been objectionable because they have been written in a partisan spirit. The writers have treated the question from their own point of view, and have all regarded certain forms of religious faith as Christianity. Yet Christianity may, after all, be something not yet taught in any creed exclusively or covered by any existing church form. The whole world may have so far departed from the teachings and the life example of Christ himself as to have left Christianity without a faithful representative in the pulpit or at the altar. Before it can be said to have succeeded or to have failed one should be able to determine what Christianity is. May not the pure, divine, heavenly inspiration which began to establish itself in the hearts and minds of men by a stern denunciation of the errors of the then existing faith, which, miraculously, as it were, set aside the vices of Judaism, the learning of the Greeks and the Church power of the Romans, in its turn, have been supplanted by the substitution of temporal power for spiritual faith, and the acquisition of wealth in place of the disinterestedness of poverty? May not dogma have taken the place of the love of God and the love of man? May not the introduction of mysticism in lieu of the clear and common sense views of morality and integrity have choked off the growth of the true plant?

The history of the human race for the past 1,800 years is filled with the bitter hatred, the internecine quarrels and the furious zeal with which mankind disputed about the proper form in which a great Supreme Being is to be worshipped. The libraries of Paris, Berlin, Vienna and the cities of Italy groan under the weight of the ponderous tomes about matters now almost obsolete connected with what is still called Christianity. But have all these things about which, however, the so-called Christian world is still at war, with the pen, pulpit and press for its weapons and battle fields, anything really to do with Christianity? These things are important to the welfare of sects. They are vitally essential to the maintenance of the worldly power of churches and tabernacles. They must be kept up to provide money to pay the salaries of priests, pastors, organists and deacons. They are needful, perhaps, to secure the ornamentation of cities by handsome church edifices and cathedrals. But has not Christianity for a long time been wounded in the house of its own friends?

A great deal of learning has been and still is expended on the attempt to prove, or disprove, the small and unimportant miracles narrated in the Old and New Testaments. In the meantime the great miracle of Christianity itself, its growth and expansion from such a seemingly humble origin remains undeniable and indisputable. And to that one might be inclined to add the contemplation of another great miracle—to wit, that any vestige of Christianity remains at all after the assaults made upon it, not by those who have been denounced from the pulpits and colleges, but by those who stand in the pulpits and lecture from the college chairs—well known and acknowledged hypocrites, men like the Scribes and Pharisees of old. Even if your zealous contributors on this theme were to succeed in proving, to their own entire satisfaction, that no soul could be saved without the full immersion of the body in cold water, or that Henry VIII. never would have made a Protestant country of England if he had been allowed to carry out his matrimonial views somewhat as King David before him, or that the adoration of the Virgin chosen by the Almighty to be overshadowed and made the mother of Himself in another form was a heathenish idolatry, or that the emphatic declaration of the Son of Man that "the Father is greater than Me" meant just the reverse, or that to question whether the world was really made in six solar days of twenty-four hours each, the sun itself not having been made until the third day, is an evidence of shocking scepticism; or that to believe that the sun appeared to stand still upon Gideon makes it necessary to believe that the earth stopped turning on its axis—even if all these became axioms, it would do nothing toward solving your great question.

For, to repeat it, in order to know whether Christianity has failed to improve the condition of the human race, it is first necessary to find out what Christianity is. And until that point, about which there always has been such a difference of opinion, shall begin to be settled, in practice and not in form, the question must remain unanswered. True it is that there is one Christian sect claiming that all the rest of the world must ask no questions and come blindfold into their enclosure and then all will be fixed. But just now, as it seems to have a great practical question on its mind, growing out of filthy lucre and producing what is called debt, but not what is supposed to be meant by that word in the Pater Noster, it can hardly expect a patient hearing. For, in truth, it seems a strange sort of contradiction that while Father Lambert is left in limbo by associate presidents of life insurance companies and trust companies and savings banks—his trouble being in his special line of business—another reverend Father, whose entanglements grow out of occupations in which he never was supposed to be employed, should call at once to his aid the attention of all his Church people throughout Christendom.

In the meantime the right to think of this subject, so full of interest to all men, will be clearly maintained. The HERALD deserves and receives the thanks of all its intelligent readers, who number by the hundred thousand, for its patience in keeping its columns open for its discussion. It is in this way doing good to its fellow men. LEX.

IS IT AN IMPROPER QUESTION?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—

Christianity can never be a failure, though many so-called Christians are trying to make it appear so, they being, as Christians, a failure themselves. Your question reminds me that asking improper questions is much easier than giving proper answers. When Luther was once asked by a haughty mocker "what God the Almighty was doing before He created heaven and earth," he answered quickly, in his peculiar style, that "the Lord was cutting rods in a birch wood to punish such impudent querists with."

There are unfortunately many people in our days who consider the Gospel as obsolete and not fit any more for the progress of the present century. They are raising themselves far beyond it, thinking that it ought to be improved; but those who think so, do they know of something better to be put in the place which Christianity now so firmly holds? During 2,000 years the arts and sciences have progressed, and yet we do not know more of God than Christ told us—that God is the most perfect spirit and the Father of all mankind; we do not know of anything more sublime about the destination of man than what Jesus taught us—that it consists of the continual endeavor to resemble, more and more, God, the Original of perfection; and we do not know of anything more comforting about eternity than what Christ has announced—namely, that it is the hand of salvation, gloriousness, perfection, rest and peace—the place of a just reward. Is it not strange that, if Christianity can actually be surpassed, it has not been done in 1,800 years? Everything human is improvable and in want of improvement. In that long course of time everything has been improved except Christianity, because it is not human, but something divine. According to Christ's doctrine there is only one improvement possible—that of man's inner life—which can and shall continually grow and increase. Everything on this earth that has been and will be did pass and will pass away. Even the earth itself had to undergo great revolutions and changes on its surface and interior, and is not the same now it was after coming out of the hands of its Almighty Creator. Yet the words of Christ did not pass away; they did not even grow old; they are without change or alteration—the only thing on earth which is not subject to the law of transientness. There is no book in this world which has been so often attacked, abused, mocked, misused and profaned, but also none which has overcome so powerfully all attacks; none from which the arrows of wit rebounded so powerless and ineffective and which has brought to shame and disgrace all weapons of mockery, irony, frivolity and impudence, and none which after every dark night did rise again like the sun only to shine more brilliantly than before except the Gospel of our Lord and Master.

Either Christ or despair! Either He is the one He says He is; and then His word is the word of God and we are inexpressibly honored, blessed and saved through Him; or He is not the one, and then Christianity is a lie and deceit, and we may take the Bible and throw it into the fire, pull down the churches and curse the name of all names. But never fear of that. May every true and good Christian live on, remaining quiet, firm and true in the right Christian belief until death—a belief which is containing already that which science and wisdom are searching in vain. The discussions, cries and queries about Christianity around us will neither endanger it nor have any disadvantageous consequences whatsoever. C. H.

A FAILURE BECAUSE A FINALITY IN A WORLD OF CHANGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—

Christianity has undoubtedly done some good in the way of restraining vicious character. The awe, reverence and honor with which it has filled a great many of its believers have kept them from doing the harm that they would otherwise have done. Probably less henroosts have been robbed in consequence. But it may be doubted that the religion has done much to directly improve the Christian part of the world. We have evidently reached a stage in our development when a religion founded on a primitive ghost theory, as the Christian religion is, finds itself losing its restraining influence and inadequate to answer the demands of the time. Christianity is a failure in its main purpose. The exaggerated human being whom Christians believe to have been the author of the plan to save them had promised it to the Jews, upon whom He looked with special favor. He watched over them, guided their footsteps and selected them as the only people upon the face of the earth whom He would deliver from persecution and to whom he would give instruction. The promised Saviour came and the Jews are not saved. Christianity, from the very stand it takes, is a failure. It claims to be a finality. If, as it represents, it is the gift of God, it must be absolutely perfect, and hence can admit of no improvement. Any system that sets out with being a finality must fail. In a stationary environment, if that were possible, the system might succeed, but as the environment constantly changes such a system of religion must cease to be or must fail in its purpose to be stationary. Though Christianity has opposed every change for the better, it has been remodelled from year to year to keep within hailing distance of the progress of the time and thus preserved its existence. It is a failure from another view. In spite of its intention to always remain a finality it ought, by its high comprehensive purposes, to have been the chief cause of our present civilization. That it has always opposed every step in progress every student of history knows. The part that Christianity has taken in civilization is the conservative one—a valuable part, indeed, but one which it assumed not to assist progression, but to suppress it. While Christianity has boasted that it was the chief cause of modern civilization it has at the same time denied the boast by maintaining its own participation in the progress. If it had not been for the application of steam to machinery, the printing press and a thousand other inventions, and if Christianity had not taken root among the descendants of the Aryan race, we may well believe that it would have been productive of no civilization. Take for example the Nestorian and Abyssinian Christians. The latter have been Christians for 1600 years, and are in just about the same condition now that they were then. Christianity is a failure because it does not accomplish what it would if it were of divine origin, as it claims to be. Instead of finding a ready acceptance it is having a hard fight with the increasing intelligence of the world, and the number of its believers, relative to the population, is on the decrease. Its missionary work is a failure. The heathen converts have a most material conception of the religion, and are not benefited by it except as it brings them in contact with more intelligent people. If I remember the figures correctly, it takes about $600 to teach an African savage to believe in a literal everlasting hell. It is a growing belief among thinking and unprejudiced people that any religion that is based on an atonement must prove a failure. It may in its early stages be of great service in co-ordinating antagonistic tribes, but eventually its supernaturalism will be its ruin. G. K. H.

SOME DIFFICULT INTERVIEWING PROPOSED.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—

Christianity is not merely a name, it is a vital principle in the soul, placed there in a supernatural way; it supersedes the natural in all things. It is free grace bought with a great price; too great to be purchased by anything that man can do. All he has to do is to accept it on the conditions offered. It was bought by the sacrificial death of its Founder. It is the only true remedy for sin, of which all mankind have been partakers. Its congregated numbers who believe and accept are the holy catholic church of Christ militant on earth, and in heaven the church triumphant. These are indisputable facts; not private or personal opinion. Thousands on earth and in heaven bear testimony. John, the divine revelator, has left us the written testimony. Revelation vii., 9, 13, 14. The Jewish nation failed as a power, civil and ecclesiastical, because they rejected Christ, the Saviour of the world. A failure! None but he who has never felt the great power of this blessed Christianity could ever even think it a failure.

Were it possible to interview all the ancient worthies who have accepted this salvation promised to Adam, from martyred Abel to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to David, and so on down the succeeding ages to Christ and the Christian era, their verdict would be victory over sin and death through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A. L. F.

WEST PHILADELPHIA.

A FUTURE STATE AS A TEST.

PORTLAND, March 12, 1879.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—

Will any of your numerous contributors on "Is Christianity a Failure?" please inform me whether or not the Bible is to be believed wholly? I am induced to ask this question because I have found so much contradiction in it. To prove my assertion permit me to quote a few chapters and verses from the Bible. By perusing the following verses you will see that in some places it speaks of a future world, in others it utterly denies the existence of any future whatever:—Psalms, xlix., 12, 20; vi., 5; lxxxviii., 10, 11, 12; cxv., 17. Ecclesiastes, iii., 18, 19, 20, 21; ix., 5, 10. Job, iv., 20; vii., 9; xiv., 10, 11, 12, 14. John, xiv. ESQUERTICO.

"THE FIGHTING ALSTONS."

A Carolina Family Whose Members Must All Die With Their Boots On.

OLD TIME CHIVALRY.

Strange and Violent Deaths of the Alstons Through Many Generations.

"COLONEL BOB" MEETS THE FATE OF HIS RACE

ATLANTA, Ga., March 14, 1879.

The killing of Colonel Robert A. Alston in this city on last Tuesday revives the memory of the most famous family probably of the old-time chivalry days—the fighting Alstons of Carolina. The history of this audacious strain of blood is interwoven with the history of those turbulent days when gentlemen fought at the drop of a hat, and a slight movement of the pistol finger was the answer to all insult or insinuation—the close of all argument.

The Alstons were gallant men of gentle blood and usually large fortunes. They were free livers and utterly reckless fighters, and frequently became involved in difficulties that drained their estates with costs and forfeitures. Probably the best known of them, Colonel Ben Alston, had several affairs of honor and wounded his antagonist every time that he went to the field. He was an imperious, passionate man, and as cool under fire as he would be in his drawing room. His most notable duel was with Hayne, whom he wounded in the knee. On one occasion he was visiting in Augusta, when a gentleman, mistaking him for an acquaintance, tapped him across the shoulders with a riding whip. Alston wheeled as quick as lightning. The gentleman apologized in the most ample terms. Alston took the whip from his hands, lashed him across the back and then said, "Now, sir, your apology is accepted." Of course a meeting followed. It is said that Alston once fought a gentleman who disputed the age of some wine of which Alston had been boasting, throwing some of the wine in his face that he might get its full flavor.

Colonel Bob Alston came of the family known as the Halifax Alstons. Their estates lay about Halifax, N. C., and they dominated that whole section for years. They were enormously wealthy and travelled from one of their estates to another in almost regal state. They had hundreds of slaves, and always travelled with a coach and four and a small army of retainers. The men were princely in their habits of expense and put the "code" above the Bible. The women were high strung and spirited. Mrs. Bob Alston, the grandmother of the subject of this sketch, always carried her own sheets and pillows with her when she travelled, and a case of loaf sugar. "I have known her," says Colonel Tom Howard, a connection, "to put $100 on a cock fight, with her own birds, and then stand and watch the struggle to the death." Colonel Willis Alston, known as "Honest Willis Alston," the grand uncle of Bob Alston, fought a dozen duels in one winter, numberless quarrels having sprung from his assaults on a defaulting State treasurer. He killed two men and was himself frequently wounded. His favorite weapon was an old-fashioned "ysger," which is a sort of blunderbuss, carrying a double handful of buck shot, and of fearful execution. A volume might be filled with the bloody exploits of these two brothers, but I shall deal only with the sons of Colonel Bob Alston, who were the later Alstons' immediate ancestors.

AN ALSTON MUST DIE WITH HIS BOOTS ON.

Old Colonel Alston, who was himself killed in a duel, had three sons—Willis, Gideon and Augustus. Willis Alston was the father of Colonel R. A. Alston. Each of these brothers came to his death by violence, or died, as the family tradition runs, "in his boots." Gideon Alston, the first of the three to die, was killed in a peculiar manner. His brother Willis was in Nashville, on a lordly frolic, when he became very much enamored of the lady who afterward married Sam Houston—a Miss Trimble, I believe. He paid her assiduous suit for several months, and, while engaged in this dalliance, formed an attachment for a young Spanish boy, named Pelat. This boy was friendless and poor and Alston adopted him, taking him home with him when he left Nashville. It appears that there was some feeling between Pelat and Gideon Alston; at any rate they left the house at night and went into the yard for the purpose of "practising with their pistols." Gideon was then a college boy, having just turned sophomore in the State University. In a few moments after he left the house with Pelat he was found in the yard, with a pistol bullet through his brain. Pelat said that he had shot himself accidentally, and this is all that was ever known of the matter.

A FLORIDA TRAGEDY.

And now comes one of the most remarkable tragedies in the history of this section so full of tragedies. There was living in Florida, then a primitive region, young Leigh Reed, a man of great ability, gentleness and courage. He was almost idolized by the people of that State for his gallant services in the fierce Indian wars, having by his skill and fearlessness several times saved the little colony from destruction by the Seminoles and their allies. A story is told of him that will illustrate his character and at the same time show how delicate was the sense of personal honor at that time. General Reed was a political opponent of Governor Call's son and at the same time his personal friend. Political feeling ran very high, and on election day a Mr. White made some reflections upon the integrity of Governor Call. Reed at once challenged him for a duel. The men went, were both desperately wounded and behaved with great gallantry, fighting, I believe, with bowie knives, their left hands being strapped together. Some time afterward Reed became involved in a difficulty with the Alstons. I give the story as it was given me by Colonel R. A. Alston himself. He said that an article appeared in a newspaper reflecting on Governor Call. Colonel Augustus Alston, who was the leader of the Call faction, demanded the name of the author. He was furnished with the name of General Reed, who was the leader of the opposite faction. He at once challenged General Reed, and a meeting was arranged. The weapons selected were "yagers," this deadly weapon being, as I have said, a favorite with the Alstons. Colonel Alston was attended by Mr. Kenon, his brother-in-law. At the word "One" Colonel Alston's gun exploded, it being hair-triggered. The contents were discharged into the air. General Reed, aiming with deliberation, fired, and Colonel Alston dropped dead in his tracks. His sister, a most spirited woman, was nearly crazed at the news of his death. She secured the lead that had killed him, and with her own hands she moulded it into bullets and sent them to her brother, Willis Alston (the father of R. A. Alston), and implored him to come and avenge the death of his brother. She wrote that he had been murdered, and the Alstons adhered to this belief, although the general statement is that the meeting was a fair one, General Reed using only his just right in firing after the explosion of Alston's "yager." At any rate it was very well understood that Willis Alston would seek revenge for his brother's death, as the family for generations had made one of all their quarrels. The first meeting between Alston and Reed was dramatic. The Legislature had just met, and Reed had been elected Speaker. He was a young man, of exceptional power and popularity, and his life promised to be brilliant and illustrious. He had invited his friends to the usual legislative supper, and the banquet was in progress, everything going merrily and well. Suddenly a tall figure, muffled in a swinging cloak and with a slouch hat drawn down over the face, stalked through the open door. Without a word it made for the head of the table, where General Reed was sitting. Instantly cries of "Alston! Alston!" arose and ran down the table. At these cries the cloak was thrown back and Alston was recognized. Reed rose from his seat, and, whipping a pistol out of his pocket, levelled it at his assailant and fired. The ball struck Alston in his uplifted hand, carrying away two fingers. This did not stop him, but brandishing a bowie knife, he closed on Reed. Before the men could be parted Reed was cut pretty severely, and Alston, I believe, wounded again. Alston was taken from the room, and for some months nothing more was heard of the matter. One day General Reed was walking down the streets of Tallahassee when he was fired upon by Colonel Alston. The contents of one barrel of a shotgun was poured into his shoulder, and as he turned to confront his assailant the other load went into his heart. He fell and died. Colonel Alston's friends say that he had given Reed notice that he intended to kill him on sight.

KILLED BY A MOB.

Willis Alston went to Texas, where he lived for some time. He settled near Brazoria. There was a Dr. Stewart, who for some reason or other, pursued the matter of the Reed killing and used remarks derogatory to Alston. Alston hearing of it wrote the remarks down, and meeting Stewart on the prairie one day asked him to say whether or not he was responsible for those remarks. Dr. Stewart took the paper, and while pretending to read it put his hand into his holsters and drew his pistols. He jumped off his horse on the side opposite Alston and fired into him. A desperate fight ensued, in which Alston was shot twice and his stomach so cut that his bowels protruded. He killed Stewart, however, pouring a load of buckshot into him after he was prone upon the earth. He was taken to jail almost dead. He was a famous fiddler, and procuring a fiddle sat there "with his entrails protruding," as he wrote to a friend, playing the old tunes of his boyhood. His body servant gained admission to his cell and had a coil of rope wrapped about his body. With this he was going to try and escape. Suddenly a mob assaulted the jail, overpowered the Sheriff, broke in the doors and seized Colonel Alston. He was game to the last, and fiddled up to the very instant he was seized, his dauntless face looking full upon his assailants. He was tumbled into a blanket, the ends twisted, and he was then hustled out of the jail. Once out in the street he was thrown to the ground, still enveloped in the blanket, and a hundred bullets were poured into his body. Thus died the last of the "Halifax Alstons." They were a remarkably athletic and handsome race of men. Gideon, who was killed by Pelot, is always cited as the handsomest youngster of his day. It may be said, here that the young Castilion who killed him was put into the navy as a midshipman and was drowned in the Mediterranean. Willis Alston was a man of wonderful strength. He once shouldered a load of 800 pounds dead weight and carried it through the streets of Sparta on a bet. His life was a stormy one. His feud with the Ingrams, a brave and powerful family, was the sensation of Georgia for the time it lasted. He always carried his "yager" with him, and escaped the whole difficulty with only one finger shot away. This feud was dramatized under the title of "The Watch," and sold largely. Its authors were never discovered or they would have been killed, as the heroes of that day did not tolerate the publication of their troubles. The manuscript was discovered one morning in the yard of a fearless widow, who published it herself and sold it, making a great deal of money by it.

COLONEL ROBERT A. ALSTON.

Colonel R. A. Alston was a remarkable man. Filled with all the chivalry, fearlessness and hot-headedness of his race, he dreaded, above all other things, meeting an end like his ancestors. It was not fear, for an Alston does not know what fear is. He was as brave a man as ever lived. In the army, as one of Morgan's lieutenants, he was the most reckless and daring of them all. He once actually had a biscuit shot from between his teeth, but with a laugh he continued his breakfast. He said to your correspondent once:—"I have a boy who is a hot-headed fellow himself, and I have taken my wife's hand in mine many a time and knee'ed with her by his bedside and prayed to God that I might bequeath him a legacy of peace and a quiet death." It was his highest ambition, as he has often said, to break the old tradition that "an Alston must die in his boots." Once again, I was with him when he was going to the field to meet Colonel E. Y. Clarke, of a rival newspaper. The challenge had been issued, and he was just going to take the midnight train. Suddenly, he turned to a dark wall, and, leaning his head on his hand, prayed aloud that God might spare him the death his people had died, and allow him to live in peace till a quiet death could claim him. He never believed, however, that this would be granted him. It made him gloomy to talk of it, but to his friends he would say that he knew his destiny was to "die the Alston death." He even had a superstition that a certain man was going to kill him. There had never been any trouble between them, but Alston always said, "That man is my fate." The man was his friend, and never became anything else. Despite these gloomy thoughts Alston was a devout believer in the code. After he had joined the Church he still adhered to his belief. "It is a peacemaker," he said. In South Carolina, where the code stood above the State law, there never was so quiet and decorous a community. In Charleston county there was not a murder in eighteen years, and the files of the Charleston *Courier* for nearly twenty-five years do not show the use of the word "liar" or "scoundrel" or any similar epithets a single time. There were no street fights or rows and no assassinations. A high code of honor was established, and it made even cowards brave men. He used to tell of a Carolina judge (Mr. Pettigrew), who, having two men before him for trying to fight a duel, said:—"Gentlemen, it will take me an hour to write out these warrants. In the meantime there is a steamer at my wharf that can take you out of my jurisdiction, so that you can complete your work before I could hold you." Colonel Alston never fought a duel himself, though he issued and accepted several challenges. The conservative spirit of these latter days almost always settles these matters without the exchange of shots. While Alston would have died before he would have submitted to a dishonorable compromise, I know what stubborn heroism it required to carry him into an affair of honor. He shrank with horror from such test. His whole life was overshadowed by the memory of his ancestors and their bloody ends. He was a recognized authority on matters of the code, and was usually called into all prominent affairs. While he was tenacious of the honor of his principals, he never stickled for technicalities, and usually succeeded in adjusting the differences. Only once was he second in a fatal meeting. He attended young McGraw, of Charleston, and loaded the pistol that killed Tabor. There had appeared in the Charleston *Mercury* a communication assailing Judge McGraw, signed with a *nom de plume*. Contrary to the usual practice of demanding the name of the author of the offensive article, Alston demanded for McGraw satisfaction of Tabor and his two editorial associates, holding that the gravamen of the offence was in the publication. The name of the author was offered and declined. Tabor then announced himself responsible. McGraw, through Alston, challenged the three editors, naming Tabor first. The parties went to the field. At the second shot Tabor jumped straight into the air, fell upon his back, shivered and died. McGraw was unhurt, and the affair stopped there.

HIS LAST MEETING.

Alston had been engaged in many personal encounters, but never had been seriously hurt. It was harder for him to take an insinuation of insult than for almost any one else; but he always repressed his anger, and, if possible, avoided trouble. He was a fine talker, a genial gentleman, of winning address, and those saved him from many difficulties that his impetuosity would have led him into. His favorite maxim, however, was the saying of Sir Boyle Roach, "The best way to avoid danger is to meet it plumply!" and his boldness often sufficed where extemporizing would have failed. In the trouble that led to his death, after he had been sent off by Cox to arm himself, his first impulse was to get a double barrelled shotgun and go and look Cox up and kill him. He was thoroughly acquainted with the violent habits of his enemy and knew best how to meet them. He was dissuaded from this course, however, by Governor Colquitt and others. He was very much depressed at the idea that Cox was hunting him down, and seemed to have a premonition of what was coming. He said, throwing himself into a chair in the Treasurer's office, "It is awful hard to know that a man is dogging you and that you have got to kill him or be killed." Instead of going off to arm himself he went into a restaurant to get some dinner. He ate heartily, but was very much worried. At length he was persuaded to take a pistol, getting one that he had never seen before, a self-cocking six-shooter. When he entered the Treasurer's office he seemed relieved to think he had found a retreat from the trouble. No sort of personal fear moved him, but the idea of bloodshed seemed to sicken him. When he saw Cox enter and half draw his pistol at a man evidently mistaken for him he seemed to know that his time had come. He grew a shade paler and his face hardened and grew stern. His first word, though, was an appeal, "I am not going to have any difficulty with you," he said; "you must let me alone." Cox still persisted, however, growing angrier all the time. At length, when he stepped back and closed the door and said, "I will force you, sir," he seemed to give up all hope. Captain John Nevins, his friend, who witnessed it all, describes the scenes that followed:—"Colonel Bob rose quiet and calm, just like he was going to make a speech. There was not a tremor about him. 'All right,' he says, 'we'll have it out right here. Are you armed?' With that he drew his pistol. Cox's was already out. I threw myself between them and said, 'No you don't, gentlemen!' Colonel Bob thrust his hand over my shoulder and fired, striking Cox in the mouth. At the same time Cox fired and the ball went through my whiskers. Their hands nearly crossed as they fired. I still held them apart. They fired again by me, and I then turned them loose. Cox was jumping and dodging around, but Colonel Bob never moved. He stood straight as a statue. After he had shot his fourth shot he turned his face to me and smiled that peculiar smile he has. As he turned he pulled trigger again and his pistol snapped. Then Cox fired again, and I saw a red spot ooze out in Colonel Bob's temple. Cox was trying to cock his pistol again when I jumped in and threw him back, catching Colonel Bob. He sank in my arms. When I turned Cox was sitting in a chair spitting blood, with his pistol on a table. He said, 'I am a dead man.' I cut Colonel Bob's shirt open." State Treasurer Raynor says that Alston put both his hands on Cox's breast, and said, "Ed, for God's sake, let us have no difficulty. I don't want to kill you; you shouldn't want to kill me."

THE ALSTON DESTINY.

Alston had a peculiarly winning and handsome face, and a semi-military manner. He stood like a statue while shooting, his handsome face set and stern, with the old Alston fire blazing from his eyes, turning his erect figure by military half wheels to present his side always to his shifting enemy. After he had been shot down Mr. Ed Mercer, who knew of his forebodings about dying with his boots on, said, "He shall not die in his boots, by God!" and tenderly took them off. The scene at the death bedside was affecting in the extreme. Only the most intimate friends and the family were admitted, a force of police beating back the host that surged against the doors. As it was evident that he must die in a few moments Mrs. Alston asked Governor Colquitt, who was kneeling by the bedside and who was devotedly attached to the dying man, to pray. With a voice broken with emotion, holding Alston's hand, the Governor prayed aloud, while every head in the room was bowed and every eye streamed with tears. And thus without a shudder, with hardly a moan, his face peaceful and half smiling, he died. In his bed, his wife and friends about him, prayers going to God with his fleeting soul, and only the ghastly blue-red hole in his temple to tell that the old Alston destiny had overtaken him and that he had left the old Alston heritage to his son.

He leaves two brothers; one a prominent Alabamian and the other living on his place—both most excellent gentlemen. He leaves a wife and four children—a devoted and admirable family. They have a fine plantation; but the noble generosity of Colonel Alston's life leaves little else. He was a true man, a gallant friend, a rising statesman. The whole city and thousands of friends throughout the Union mourn his death. Cox is getting better, but will be sent to jail to await his trial.

PARIS AT THE THEATRE.

Sarah Bernhardt—Her Fancies and Caprices.

FUGITIVE AND IDOL.

Her Successes as Actress and Sculptress.

A SKELETON IN THE BEDROOM.

PARIS, March 1, 1879.

The audiences of the Paris theatres are divided into two very distinct categories, two classes diametrically opposed to each other—the class *dirigeante* and the class *dirigée*—the class which makes reputations and the class which consecrates them. The public of the class *dirigeante* is relatively restricted. It is composed strictly of the persons who make it a point of being present at all the first representations of new works—a public in itself sufficiently peculiar to justify my devoting to it an article on another occasion. It exercises the functions of judge, I will not say of justiciary. It glorifies or condemns the pieces and their interpreters; its decrees carry with them fortune or ruin; it has a hundred journals to record its sentences and a thousand tongues to circulate its fiats. Profiting by its unrestricted power it exhibits all the caprices of tyranny. It has a horror of successes which are too prolonged and crushes its idols in less time than it took to create them. One evening it assists at the début of a *chanteuse* of operettas. The débutante has but little voice; she has struggled against a sort of chronic hoarseness; as a comédienne there is room for improvement, but she is pretty, adorably pretty, fair, delicate, with caressing blue eyes and a mouth beaming with the sweetest of smiles. She might be taken for a portrait by Greuze issuing from its frame. Every one admits that she is charming. "How droll her gestures are," you hear on every side. "How comically she walks and bends her body forward like a marionette. The voice, even though rather *voilée*, is far from being disagreeable." From one day to the next she becomes celebrated. She is the *diva, la diseuse à la mode*. She is fêted everywhere and overwhelmed with bouquets. The reporters publish her biography and the illustrated journals her portrait. This lasts for two or three years, at the end of which time the star begins to pale and to fade out in the Parisian firmament; the sameness of her actions palls. All that appeared charming at first now appears totally divested of charms. People's eyes are closed to the artist's qualities in order that they may see only her defects. The public of the class *dirigée* acts as chorus. It is strong in number, but it never uses the strength which it thus possesses. It does not care to manifest its independence; it admires what it is told to admire; it goes where it is told to go; it is but a reflection, an echo. When the idol is broken it does not trouble itself even to collect the pieces.

MLLE. SARAH BERNHARDT.

An artist who has admirably appreciated the dangers of these sudden caprices of the public taste is Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt. She knows that her indisputable value does not protect her against them, for the taste for a particular artist soon changes into lassitude, and to guard against the fancies of the public Mlle. Bernhardt has become more fantastical than her audiences. She exhibits herself daily under a new form. She is not merely an actress but a sculptress, a painter, a writer, a poet and an aeronaut. The consequence is that we hear of nothing but her multifarious talents. Of all the actresses of Paris she is the one whose noisy as well as brilliant reputation seems to be the most solidly established. There is even in my opinion a great deal of exaggeration in the worship of which she is the object. Seductive as she is, great as is her talent, the artist is certainly not equal to her reputation. Tall, thin and straight and exhibiting none of the plumpness of the woman, fair in complexion, with a mouth full of promise, sensual lips, a hooked nose, and eyes with wonderful expressiveness, Sarah Bernhardt is a charmer in the fullest sense of the word. She sheds around her an atmosphere of incomparable attraction. She not merely knows how to draw people within the circle of her fascinations, but to hold them there. Born of a Dutch mother and of Jewish origin, she combines with the semi-masculine energy of the children of the North the Bohemian instincts and the vagabond humor of the Semitic race. Her voice is one of the gentlest and most caressing that it is possible to hear. A critic said of her, "She recites verses just as the nightingale sings. She is herself the muse of poetry."

"CE N'EST PAS MALIN."

Educated in a convent at Versailles, she entertained for a brief period the idea of becoming a nun. But after a little reflection she arrived at the conclusion that she was not calculated for a contemplative life. "Then," she said to herself, "I will be an actress." And she began by giving to her name of Bernard, a rather common one, an original character by adding to it an "h" and a "t." From Bernard she consequently became Bernhardt, after which she entered the Conservatoire. She could never obtain a first prize there. The year of her first examination a first prize was given to Mlle. Lloyd, now a rather obscure *pensionnaire* of the same Comédie Française of which Sarah Bernhardt is one of the pillars.

"*Ce n'est pas malin*," exclaimed Sarah, when the jury had announced their decision; "she managed to make herself agreeable to all the members of the jury."

"*Si ce n'est pas malin*," retorted Mlle. Lloyd, "why did you not do the same?"

Nevertheless the jury of the conservatoire has rendered a verdict which the public of the time hastened to confirm. Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt made her début at the Théâtre Français on the same evening as Mlle. Lloyd. She had no success there, while her rival was loudly applauded. Mlle. Bernhardt remained but a short time in the Rue Richelieu and accepted an engagement at the Gymnasse. But she had scarcely entered there before she distinguished herself by her manner of quitting it. One evening just as the piece was about to commence the director received a despatch couched in the following brief terms:—

Tant pis. Je pars en Espagne.

SARAH BERNHARDT.

Happily at this period the fugitive belonged to a class that it was easy to replace. The director did not even think of claiming from her the penalty of 10,000 francs stipulated in her engagement.

HER FIRST SUCCESSES.

She returned from Spain, accepted an engagement at the Porte St. Martin, where she played and sang in fairy pieces of which nobody now preserves any recollection. Then, without any other transition, she went and proposed herself as a tragedienne at the Odeon. That theatre was at the time controlled by two associate directors, MM. Duquesnel & De Chilly. The first, finding her interesting and uncommon, engaged her without even consulting his partner. M. de Chilly saw her for the first time on the evening of her début at the second Théâtre Française.

"What! he exclaimed, is that the tragédienne that they seek to impose on me? Why, she is no woman; she is merely a bag of bones."

This director had a horror of thin women; *embonpoint* was with him one of the highest of qualities, and it frequently happened to him during his long career to judge of the talent of actresses by their physical weight.

His partner, M. Duquesnel, defended her.

"She is thin, no doubt," he said, "but never mind that; she has the stuff in her, all the same."

The young tragédienne remained at the Odéon. It was there that she formed herself; it was there that she had her first success. Her thinness, even, which had proved so displeasing to M. de Chilly, helped her wonderfully in the "Passant," where she played a travestied part so well as to be really taken for a boy. She has, therefore, never done anything to put flesh on her bones—quite the contrary. And since she made her first appearance at the Odeon she has never ceased to grow thinner, nor will she ever c