THIS WORLD

WHEN IT COMES TO THE SCRATCH

Pope Leo has had visions of the glory awaiting him. He has caught glimpses of the divine bewilderment and heard soft strains of the celestial rhapsodies. He says he knows the honor, reward and ecstacies in store for him.

Yet he lingers and suffers. He don't want to let go of even a few hours of senile worldliness. He is hanging on to this sinful old earth like a bull dog to a sow's ear.

He submits to operations and takes advantages of the highest medical skill to keep him away from the place for which he so long hath sought and mourned because he found it not. He is surrounded by a gang of red vultures who are cussing under their breaths, and wondering why the old imp don't die, and he knows of their intrigues, and feigned sorrow and crocodile eye-wash, and though he could pass in a day, (by dispensing with the doctors), from that scene of suffering and intrigue to one of health and youth and celestial transport, still he hangs on to his doctors, and submits to the probe, in order to get another day of the only life he really knows anything about.

It is the most striking instance of Christian tenacity and preference for this life to that of another, which has ever come to the observation of humanity.

He prefers his job and his senile infirmities, and the surgeon's knife, and one more ray of sunshine in his window, to all the ease and raptures of Paradise; one more day among his wrangling, lying, treacherous band of conspirators against humanity, than exchange of companionship with God Almighty, and all his shining seraphins.

The old Pope's desperate attempt to keep from God and out of heaven, is bound to have a wholesome effect upon the minds of millions of the superstitiously enslaved. It will set them thinking. They will begin to ask themselves, why does he seek to stay, when the exchange which must be soon, anyhow, will release him from suffering, and bring him eternal happiness? They will begin to say that Christian desire for heaven is not so strong as Christians pretend. The example of the Pope, whom age has robbed of every incentive to live, but who still shrinks from taking the leap in the dark, would indicate that the heaven of bliss awaiting him, is more in his imagination than in his belief.

This is what people will say, having such a prominent object lesson before them.

They will see more clearly that the case of the Pope is but a repetition of the whole mass of Christianity. They are all alike—they want a doctor post haste, if there is any danger of dying, and they employ every means at hand to keep out of heaven as long as possible.

This is the courage(?) of the dying Christian. We will now be regaled with the beautiful death of Leo. We will be told of his resignation and his fortitude, and his sweet Christian faith, and his miraculous endurance, but never once will it be told that until his last gasp, he employed his doctors to keep him away from God and out of heaven.

Even benighted Catholics are beginning to see through some things, and nothing can be plainer to many of them than that the tenacious holding on of the Pope to things worldly, is evidence sufficient of his doubt of living again; and they will say that this remarkable illustration of the Pope's doubt, is but a reflection of Christian doubt generally.

Protestants are far more doubtful than Catholics. They too, think a lot of a doctor, if there is any danger of them going to the arms of Jesus, and they want him to stay right by them, and keep them out of heaven, even when the preacher has come and prepared their souls for Paradise.

They would a good deal rather the doctor keep them alive with the chance later of going to hell and burning forever and forever.

But should they die, the preacher will point to their beautiful Christian deaths, their sweet abiding faiths, and **their lamb-like resignation.**

Oh, yes! The Christian has fortitude (?) and is courageous (?) and sweetly resigned (?) to hear the priest and preacher tell it; but to hear the doctor tell it, he'll be purged and probed at the last gasp, if it will keep him out of heaven.

A good many years ago when I was Ward Physician—that is Doctor for the Poor, or Poor Doctor—I was called to see an old Irish woman, who lived by gathering waste paper, rags, etc. I had seen her often on my rounds, and observed her sorting waste scraps out of garbage barrels. Upon these scraps she lived.

Upon examination I found her unconscious, totally blind, gasping for breath, her abdomen greatly swollen and tight as a drum.

The priest had been there and prepared her for glory. I had been called in just for medical evidence, and for the purpose or signing the death certificate, so as to evade a coroner's investigation. The room was full of women.

I was told that I could do nothing, that Father Peters had just been there, and he said that she was dying.

Nevertheless, I examined her, pronounced her case gastritis and insisted on doing something for her.

Then the Irish vocabulary was turned loose. I was repeatedly told that Father Peters said she was dying, and I could do nothing. Half a dozen women were holding lighted candles close around her head, and about two dozen were gibbering something like this:

Hail Mary! Queen of the Sun, Queen of the Stars, Queen of the Earth, Queen of Heaven, Queen of men, Queen of flowers, Queen of mercy, Queen of love, Queen of grace, and Queen of forty-eleven other commonwealths, all expressed in the beautiful Irish tongue—a regular Queen pandemonium.

I told them that I was called to do something for the woman if I could, and that it was my duty to do so, and I insisted that I be given the chance, otherwise, I would not sign the death certificate, and a "crowners" investigation would have to be held.

This changed their minds, and I was told to go ahead, but reminded again I could do nothing as Father Peters said she would die.

I said to them, Father Peters is not a doctor and don't know what he's talking about. It is just his opinion that she'll die, but I'll be d-d if she shall die. Now just take those candles away, and stop all this howling, for the woman can't either see or hear, and it don't do any good, anyhow, and give me a chance.

At this, there was considerable murmuring, and in another room, an angry confab was held, and it was determined to pitch me out the window, and I afterwards learned that several toughs were sent for to do me up. I noticed some men gathering in an outer room, but had no idea what they were gathering for.

In the meantime, I took a trocar and punctured the abdominal wall, just as I used to stick a knife in the side of cow, who had filled up on two much dry fodder, and the wind whistled "Erin go bragh," and her abdomen immediately collapsed.

I then gave her an enema and evacuated the garbage, and soon she opened her eyes and said: "And what the divil are ye all after standin' around me this way for?"

To make a long story short, she got well, and after that I was weighted down with palaver, and I was confidentially told that the very women who had sent for the toughs to kill me for speaking disrespectfully of Father Peters and their holy religion, were the very ones who were loudest in their praise. And for a long time after I was sent for to keep the sick from dying, after extreme unction had been given.

Invariably the women would be there who wanted to have me killed in this case, and they would look me right in the face and tell me how others there did not want anything done, but it was they who insisted I should do what I could, and "but for them insistin' and me workin' she wouldn't a' been livin' today; and I was jist tellin' Mrs. O'Donnel here, that I was prisent, and how you came, and how we tould you that Father Paters said she would die, and how you said Father Paters didn't know what he was talkin' about, and you'd be-dahmed if she should die, and be-dahmed if she did die, and begorra, ye-re a smarter man than Father Paters."

This is the kind of palaver I got from women who were going to have me pitched out of the window, but who thought, maybe I could save others, after extreme unction, as I did that woman; and they kept me trotting, and the divil of a dahmed cint did I ever get out of any of them.

The story well illustrates my point, that from low to high and high to low—from Mrs. Maginness to Pope Leo, they want a doctor to keep them out of heaven, even after their souls are prepared to go there.

And I am led to believe, from my observations, that there is not one single intelligent being but doubts an after existence. He may say he believes, even say that he**knows,** and stick to it, but from the fact that he don't want to leave this fleeting life of sorrow, for another world of everlasting bliss, that he opposes the change with all his might, is evidence enough, that he entertains secret doubts. Not for the world would he let any one know it, but he doubts, and cannot help it, simply because he knows that he does not know.

No matter how he may be trained from childhood up in the belief of a Christian heaven—still he doubts and cannot help but doubt.

I do not count it **a beautiful Christian death,"** where a doctor is employed to the last minute to keep a professed Christian from going to the arms of his dear Savior.

The man who goes out under the quiet stars, and gazing upon them for the last time, and upon the sleeping earth all about him, upon the lulled strife and passions of humanity, and bidding them all farewell, bravely faces the unknown, puts a pistol to his head, says "Here goes," and fires—such a death is far more beautiful and resigned to me, for there is no cowardly, hypocritical pretense about it.

The Pope has made his last confession, received "extreme unction" at the hands of another man, all of which pow-wow is exercised to bolster up a wicked conscience in a dying hour. There is nothing brave or courageous about it. It is cowardly in the extreme. With all this preparation, he still wants to live, and is employing the best medical skill to keep him from experiencing the glories of heaven.

The Pope's desire to live reminds me of an epitaph on the tombstone of Reuben Miller in Fern Cliff cemetery, Springfield, Ohio. It was written by himself, for himself, and reads as follows:

Epitaph on Reuben Miller.

Here lies a man—a curious one,
No one can tell the good he's done,
Nor yet how much of evil;
Where now his soul is, who can tell?
In heaven above or low in hell?
With God, or with the devil?

While living here, he oft would say,
That he must shortly turn to clay,
And quickly rot;
This thought would sometimes cross his brain,
That he, perhaps, might live again,
And maybe not.

As sure as he in dust doth lie,
He died because he had to die,
But much against his will;
Had he got all that he desired,
This man would never have expired
He had been living still.

Reuben Miller was a pioneer citizen of Springfield, and had been County Auditor for eighteen years. He was noted for writing humorous verse, and the above would indicate that he possessed poetical genius. He was a life-long active member of the Methodist church, and a deacon at the time of his death, and given a Methodist funeral and rocketed off to a Methodist heaven.

But his epitaph shows that he died, entertaining grave doubts of an after life, and like the old Pope, preferred this life when it came to the scratch.

It is the same with every one, no matter what their professions of desire to embark for another life. They are never so certain, but they pause at the uncertainty. Of course, I make an exception of fanatics and diseased or dwarfed brains. I refer wholly to rational beings.

The Pope's Sickness

Has brought on an endless mess of gush. Nothing but good is seen in his life and actions. Not a paper in America, has come bravely out, and said that his love (?) for America, so constantly expressed, is simply a conspiracy to capture the country. Not a paper has once stated that he secretly conspired with other powers of Europe, to defeat us in the Spanish war, and that he gave his blessing to every Spanish soldier who was sent against us. Now we see every commercial paper in the country paying homage to one of the most skulking and vicious enemies this country ever had.

It is enough to turn the stomach of a turkey buzzard—such fawning and grovelling and spewing of sop.

In my opinion the Pope has not been one-tenth as sick as pretended. I have said so ever since the first announcement of his illness.

It has happened for the last ten years, whenever the Pope sneezed it would be made an occasion for sending a telegram around the world.

Of course he has been senile for years, and feeble mentally and physically, and has been drying up, just like an old lady, 104 years old, who died in Cincinnati last week. There is nothing remarkable about his longevity, greater examples of which are seen all about us.

He has not been a drunkard and made a hog of himself on wine like other Popes, and the majority of Cardinals and priests, and his temperate habits, surrounded as he is, by wine guzzlers, is the only really remarkable thing about him.

Medical Bulletins

I have been watching the medical reports. One day he is in coma, and the next he is walking about his room. The next day he is just alive, and the next he is hearing mass, and making appointments.

His average pulse has been 85 to 95, which is the normal senile pulse.

I believe that the Sacred College (?) has started an unnecessary alarm about his illness for political effect, and for the purpose of counteracting the revolt against the church in Spain, France and Italy, by awakening sympathy. From the very fact that he has been dying every fifteen minutes for two weeks, and isn't dead yet, but apparently on the road to recovery, shows that there is a motive in their fool madness.

But unlucky for them, the Pope is holding out too long, and a reactionary effect has come.

The people have grown weary of reading about him, and the reports are beginning to pall—in fact, has

Gotten to be a Chestnut.

If he had had the good sense to have died right off in two or three days, it would have been a great card for them, but now their powder has all burned.

At this writing, he is reported to have a cancer.

Think of God Almighty having a cancer. If this is true, he cannot last long, and possibly will be in heaven by the time this is printed. Anyhow, the papers are not gushing so much as at first. When, at last, he dies, they'll splatter the ink for a day or two, and then, the world will move on just the same, while he goes to take up his abode in the silent halls of oblivion, along with all the other pretended God Almighties who have preceded him.

The Pope Personally

Is not such a bad man. He is just about as good as it is possible for a Pope to be. He is the head of a villanious organization, and is often compelled to do things, to which, he no doubt objects. I believe that he is, by nature, a kindly disposed man. But like the Czar, he is compelled to obey the government, and is more or less a figure head. The General of the Jesuits is a far greater force in the Catholic church than the Pope.

Intellectually

The pope is ordinary. He is no fool to be sure. He is a scholar. He has studied the thought of other people. He has had wide experience, in a way, and no doubt expanded with it. But neither his experience nor position can make a great man of him, unless he has a great brain—a brain which has produced something. What has he produced? He effects to be a poet, and has published a book of poems.

Who knows anything about them? Why he wouldn't fill a ruffle in the skirts of Ella Wheeler Wilcox. He is God, why hasn't he written a poem equal or superior to Tennyson's "In Memoriam?" or even Leigh Hunt's "Abou Ben Adhem," or even Gene Fields "Little Boy Blue?" He has written some Labor Encyclicals, which died a bornin'—childish, impracticable, inert and ancient. Labor organizations gave them some little attention at the time, out of consideration of winning Catholics to the ranks, and then dropped the silly stuff. They were simply breath wasted. Show me a speech, a paper, a poem, even a proverb, uttered by Pope Leo, which has commanded universal intellectual respect, or which has passd into current literature?

So far as I have been able to observe, he has distinguished himself only in one thing, and that is his opposition to Socialism, which proves that his friendship for labor has been all a pretense.

In his opposition to Socialism, and to secret orders, he has exercised some individuality and influence, but it is now having a reacting effect.

Socialism is advancing at rapid strides in Catholic countries, even in Holy Rome, and secret societies are running the politics of Catholic France.

He has lived to see Socialism, Free Masonry and Infidelity, the three societies most obnoxious to him, taking the sceptr of government into their hands.

Cardinal Gibbons

Says, "The next Pope must be a man imbued with modern ideas."

What does he mean by "modern ideas?" Why, he means the ideas which have outgrown the church. Who have advanced these ideas? Why, scientists, Liberals, Infidels. Therefore the next Pope must be a little more modern—that is, a little more Infidel—a little more Spencerian, a little more Darwinian, a little more Ingersollian, a little more Whitmanesque, a little more up-to-date, a little more in step with Infidel progress, a little more Socialistic, and on the side of the Toiler instead of the Aristocrat.

In my opinion, he would better be a little more of something consistent, truthful and useful, if he don't want to be but little more than a pious ass who has to awaken himself by his own kicking and braying.

Yes, the Pope's hanging on to this world is comical indeed. He has had millions praying for him, and had charms and cures galore sent to him, and all the saints have been on the hustle, interceding for him, and miracles have been performed, and relics consulted, and madonnas importuned, and ghosts have walked, one of which nearly skeered the life out of him, and Cardinals have shed, on, such bitter tears over him, but all to no purpose—he still sticks to his Infidel physicians, and relies on their skill in fighting off old rattle-bones, with his long reaching scythe.

To Sum Him Up.

He has spent a long life of intrigue, meddling with States, favored Kingcraft, conspired against government by the people, plundered his own devotees, by training them to believe in his power to bless and forgive, opposed free speech and scientific advancement, forbade the reading of books which sought to enlighten his mental serfs, opposed and degraded the labor upon which he lived and blazed, consumed much, produced nothing, lived the life of a hypocrite, and died the death of a coward.

P. S.—Since writing the above, the Pope is reported as sure enough dead. Now there will be a lot of rascally trickery going on between the Sacred (?) College (?) and Monarchical governments as to who shall succeed him.

W.

EVERY LITTLE HELPS.

A friend of the Blade and residing in Cincinnati, and it's easy to guess who it is, requests us to print the following and keep it standing in the columns of the Blade until "Dog Fennel" is ready for distribution:

I notice that the postage on "Dog Fennel" will be about 20 cents. While 20 cents is not a large sum to any one man, yet a thousand times 20 makes $200—quite a little fortune just now to the publisher of the book.

I therefore offer my services to distribute the book to your subscribers in Cincinnati, if you send them all to me by freight. In cities where you have but few subscribers you can send it by express as "printed matter" at a low rate to one person, who will volunteer to distribute the book to the subscribers as I do.

Those who desire the book sent directly—and in some towns there may be only one subscriber—should add 20 cents for postage (stamps will do) when remitting their one dollar for the book. Those who have already paid their dollar are still "at liberty" to send 20 cents in stamps for postage.

This suggestion, or rather appeal, is made by the writer without the knowledge, consent or approval of the publisher of "Dog Fennel."

MAY COLLINS BARLOW.

Born to Mr. John and Juliet Barlow (nee Collins), Cincinanti, O., July 11, a bouncing nine pound baby girl, who has been named May Collins Barlow.

All who have seen this infant declare her an exact image of the original May, and May she be just as brilliant, and live to take up and continue the great work where her distinguished relative laid it down.

W.

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N. L. P.

This Column is Dedicated to the National Liberal Party—Matter Intended for Publication Should Be Addressed to Morris Sachs, Secretary, Atlas Bank Building, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Friends of Freethought interested in the welfare of others as well as their own are requested to send for copies of the Constitution and By-Laws of the **National Liberal Party.** The Secretary will gladly send such copies together with other useful information free of charge. See address above.

The office of the Secretary of the National Liberal Party was honored with a visit from Bro. Pearl W. Geer, manager of the Torch of Reason, a few weeks ago. The visit was highly appreciated, especially since Bro. Geer left a dollar as dues for 1904.

Scottsville, Ky., Mar. 26, 303.
Mr. Morris Sachs:

Dear Sir—If practicable please send me a few copies of th Constitution of "The National Liberal Party," and any other advertising matter you may have for the promotion of the party. I will try and secure us a few members. If there is any charge for the above mentioned matter let me know the amount. Yours for H. H. R.,

J. C. SHIPLEY, JR.

Versailles, Ky., May 25, 303.
Mr. Morris Sachs:

Dear Friend—Yours of the 23rd to hand. Now you have me in a tight place, asking for another article on "Why I am an Atheist?" The reason I did not enter the symposium was I did not feel competent to handle the great subject. For weeks I have been giving down physically and am so mentally fagged that I can do no satisfactory work, and to add to it all I have been going through the throes of spring cleaning, painting, papering, etc.

Of course you don't know what that means, but Mrs. Sachs does, as that is one of the avenues of endeavor that women have a trust on. I want to comply with your request and will if I can write anything worth while, but I fear I will not be equal to reflect any credit among so many able contributors. If the "sperit" would only move I would try it. You know how that is.

There are such good articles among them, and they are thought-provoking and educative, and I think it a good idea to print the pamphlet. I am hoping I will be able to keep at my work during the summer, but I doubt it.

The condition of the Blade depresses me greatly, and I only wish I could suggest some plan to put it on solid footing. I have stood by the paper for nearly 20 years, and fought all kinds of battles for it and it would break my heart to see it go down.

I am trying to rally some new contributors for it, for I feel that I have pre-empted too much space, and in my broken down condition I cannot do justice to the Blade readers or myself.

I got today a copy of Saladin's London Agnostic Journal containing in serial, my lecture on "Woman and Christianity," and a business man of Baltimore has had it printed in pamphlet for free distribution, and is sending them broadcast to women's clubs.

If I can write on "Why I am an Atheist" I will send it to you, and if I do not you may know I am not able.

Let us stay by the Blade. I am hoping some plan will be devised to put it in fine shape. Thanks for quarterly report; we are grateful to you for your splendid service. With kind regards to Mrs. Sachs and yourself, also Mr. Wamsley and Dr. Wilson, I am fraternally,

JOSEPHINE K. HENRY.

Larchmont, N. Y., April 29, 1903.
Mr. Morris Sachs:

My Dear Sir—You are very kind to remember me in the invitation extended to Liberals in the Blade of April 26th. If I were in usual health, I would respond for publication, but as it is, I will simply send you a private letter. My brain is in hardly normal condition after an illness which followed me up all winter. I would not like at this time to attempt to write anything intended to be put in cold type. The subject is one which can hardly be handled safely by anything less than a robust mind. Nevertheless, for your personal information, I will say:

I cannot truthfully call myself an Atheist. When a boy of only twelve years, I joined the Presbyterian church. Without any access to Liberal publications such as Paine's Age of Reason, or similar works, or Liberal literature of any description, I evoluted out of Presbyterianism before reaching the age of twenty. Perhaps I was then as near Atheism as I shall ever be. Editing a paper about that age, spirit rappings came into prominence from some strange manifestations in the family of the Rev. Dr. Phelps, of Stratford, Conn., and the Fox sisters of Rochester, N. Y. I think my paper was the only one, (although I had many publications on my exchange list) to advise investigation rather than ridicule. The disposition of the press at that time was to pooh pooh them.

I personally knew Andrew Jackson Davis, Prof. Rhodes Buchanan, Prof. Mansfield, the writing medium, and other celebrities of the cult. Some of their alleged manifestations seemed phenominal. Science failed to account for them. I joined the Society for Psychical Research soon after its organization, but I have never received any satisfactory evidence to carry me into the ranks of the spiritualists, and while my namesake, who publishes the Freethinker, in London, ridicules the idea that there can be any difference between Agnosticism and Atheism, to my mind there is, and up to the present moment I prefer to be rated an Agnostic, for there are too many mysteries connected with our mundane existence, to be positive of anything that science does not absolutely demonstrate to be truth.

I am quite well satisfied in regard to any question I do not feel positive about, to say that I am an Agnostic, and let it go at that, for if there really be any Infinite Being, how is it possible for the Finite to comprehend the Infinite? The question practically answers itself. I am greatly interested in all the discussions pro and con relating to the greatest mystery of life and death, but not finding it possible thus far to reach any definite conclusion, I am content to be classed on this important subject with the greatly revered Dr. Huxley.

Yours truly,
E. B. FOOTE.

Pasadena, Cal., Fb. 20, 1903.
My Dear Friend:

The certificate came in due season; many thanks. I live in New Hampshire but I am a tramp; shall go home in June. I came out here two years ago; went to the Hawaiian Islands last year; shall remain here until April, then shall be at San Jose until I leave for home. Am glad to hear from the Freethought people at any and at all times. Mrs. Henry is a great woman. I think she is the broadest and finest woman in the world; Mrs. Closz is a close second. I trust you are well. Yours very truly,

MARILLA M. RICKER.

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