tion. Some scientists become sceptics while seriously seeking after truth—but without a guide. They study religious questions; meet with difficulties which puzzle them; and, being discouraged, look upon religion as unreasonable, incomprehensible, and finish by abandoning it altogether. Most of the truths of religion—although absolutely certain—have some obscurities about them. If, instead of paying attention to the proofs which show the existence of a truth, we consider the obscurities of the truth itself, by an error of judgment, we may easily conclude that the truth has no foundation at all, whereas it is manifestly certain, though obscure and incomprehensible. Only weak-minded people imagine they can explain and understand everything. There is a great difference between believing a thing without proofs, and believing it because we have proofs of it, and are certain of its existence, although we cannot understand it. To believe anything without proof is unwise. To believe what is well attested, whether we understand it or not, is a mark of wisdom. Those who will admit only what they can understand might as well deny the millions of twinkling stars of the firmament, the flowers of the field, the birds of the air, the fishes of the deep; for we understand thoroughly none of them: we only know them imperfectly and externally. Every human science is finite and imperfect; God alone who has made all things has a clear, perfect and adequate knowledge of every one of them. Our intellect is very limited, our very existence is a mystery to us. To try, therefore, to understand everything with our finite intellect is to ignore the very law of our nature—it is a ridiculous and senseless presumption. A philosopher should not pay much attention to the obscurities of a thing, but to the strength of the arguments which demonstrate its nature and existence. The last, not least, cause of scepticism is pusillanimity. Many scientists are very weak-minded; they are afraid to study our holy religion, lest they should be obliged to embrace it, and change their lives. Let us be courageous—let us not be afraid of the truth; our ignoring or denying it will not destroy it. Why, therefore, not study it, and see it as it is, particularly when it is certain we cannot be saved except we embrace it if we can. If you speak to some scientists of certain truths they do not relish, they turn their head aside and say, "I do not believe it!" These men are rebellious to light; they are unreasonable; so long as they persevere in their wilful error, nothing will be able to convert them. About the close of the first century there lived a famous philosopher called Justin. He studied Greek literature and philosophy—not believing in the absurdities of paganism—he examined the philosophical systems of Pythagoras, Aristotle, and Plato. The theory of Plato pleased him most; yet he found it shallow and imperfect. He had heard about the Christians; but they were so much despised, that he did not think truth could be found among them. One day, as he was walking along the sea-shore, he met with a venerable old man. Pleased with his appearance, he entered into conversation with him. This old man was a Christian. He advised him to pray, to read the Holy Scriptures, and consult some eminent theologian, who would explain to him the Christian doctrine, and answer his difficulties. Justin did so. He was converted, and became an apologist and a martyr. The first thing that impressed Justin when he studied Christianity was the dogma of a Supreme God, Creator, and Preserver of all things. The next was the nature, origin, and destiny of man, and his total dependence upon God, so clearly stated by Catholic teachers. He found no difficulty in admitting divine revelation, prophecies, and miracles, to guide him to his destiny. The idea of an infallible Church pleased *him*, and he rejoiced to have found a guide, who, assisted by Heaven, would never lead him astray. Let sceptics do the same; let them pray, let them resolve to lead a holy life, let them put aside their prejudices. Let them study the proofs of the existence of God, of the divinity of Christianity, of the infallible authority of the Church and of the Sovereign Pontiff. Let them expose their difficulties to a learned and experienced theologian, and all their difficulties will vanish away. With Maine de Biran they will confess that Religion alone gives the solution of all the problems of Philosophy, and saves us from doubt and uncertainty, the greatest torment of the human mind, the true poison of life—and with Augustin Thierry, they will rejoice to work for the glory of God, and the propagation of His Holy Church.

SOME EPISODES OF THE FRANCHISE DEBATE.

(Dublin *Freeman*, May 24.)

A DEFEAT, a rout, an abject *sauve qui peut*, or any other terms to represent a disastrous and shameful retreat, are alone appropriate to represent the break-down to-day of the Irish Orange opposition to the rights of Ireland. There have been indications, as I have noted, that the situation had undergone a change for the worse. I wrote in terms of what I thought legitimate triumph of the wretched collapse of Mr. Chaplin's attack on Ireland, and I thought then that we were done with this kind of thing for ever. The fact that Mr. Brodrick renewed the attack where Mr. Chaplin had so egregiously failed, and the appearance of the Conservative party once more united in holy brotherhood—still more, the fact that Sir S. Northcote had given a qualified sanction to the amendment when the question was last under discussion—led me for a while to fear that my forecast had been too sanguine, and that the fruits of the reconciliation of the different sections of the Tory party would have been a joint Conservative attack upon Ireland. The reappearance of Lord R. Churchill in his place also suggested perhaps for a moment the unworthy suspicion that he had repented of his former opinions on the subject, and was ready to make a sacrifice of his opinions in favour of Ireland on the altar of party purity and party discipline.

Lord R. Churchill took the earliest opportunity of disabusing the mind of anybody who imagined that he had changed his views, or that he was ready to shrink from their avowal. He spoke strongly in favour of the Irish claims, and not only that but with open and almost arrogant scorn of the members of his own party, who joined in the attack upon her. To Mr. W. H. Smith he was especially contemptuous. Your readers may perhaps have a faint recollection of an Orange demonstration in the Rotundo, at which this English luminary appeared, and amid the approving and enthusiastic cheers of men calling themselves Irishmen, proceeded to deliver an insolent attack upon the masses of the Irish people. Lord R. Churchill has never attempted to conceal the supreme contempt he has for Mr. W. H. Smith and one or two other contemptible mediocrities whom the caprice of Lord Beaconsfield raised to a fictitious prominence. The reminiscences of Lord Ronald Gower, which have been recently published, give an amusing account of the feelings of scorn with which Lord Beaconsfield regarded the same class. He used to ask with an amusing affectation of ignorance whether his late colleague in the Cabinet was "H. W." or "W. H." Smith, and mourn over his forgetfulness to call Sir R. Cross by his right name. Lord R. Churchill regards "Marshall and Snelgrove" in exactly the same way, and today eagerly seized a favourable opportunity of doing so. He was dealing with the "mud-cabin" argument by Mr. W. H. Smith, and declaring that this could be no more an argument against the occupiers obtaining a vote than an argument drawn from a contrast between the palace in which Mr. Smith dwelt and the humble and lowly dwelling which sheltered himself. This hit from a son of a duke at the pretentiousness and ostentation of a *parvenu* told immensely, and was loudly cheered by the Liberals and the Irish members. On the alleged illiteracy of the Irish people Lord Randolph spoke not only with good feeling but with a true and sage appreciation of the facts of the case. He pointed out the large disadvantages under which Ireland had so long laboured in the absence of the principle of compulsion which reigns in England, and on the fact that illiteracy belonged to the older and not to the newer generation of Irishmen. Finally, he protested amid Liberal cheers against antiquated Toryism, and called upon Mr. Brodrick to withdraw his amendment.

A pronouncement so outspoken spread anger and dismay among the ranks of the Irish Orangemen, and a considerable portion of the remainder of the sitting was devoted to their yells, and howls, and impotent protests against the abandonment of the odious policy of ascendancy by the most vigorous and promising representative of modern English Toryism. Lord Claud Hamilton was the first to give expression to this feeling, and launched forth into an attack—often coarsely personal—on Lord R. Churchill and Mr. Parnell, and set forth the gospel of Irish Orangeism in all its naked and brutal deformity. A few of the most ignorant and narrow Tories of the bucolic class gave an occasional cheer to this exposition of a creed outworn; but the House generally received it in contemptuous and languid silence, and the greater part even of the Conservative benches maintained a silence that denoted pain and uncertainty. The rise of Lord Edward Cavendish was a visible relief, and the house gave evidence of renewed and respectful attention. The tragic episode which associates the house of Cavendish with one of the darkest pages of Irish history naturally gives importance to anything which one of the family may say upon the Irish question, and everybody was both gratified and relieved to find that Lord Edward Cavendish gave in his adhesion to the claims of Ireland in the heartiest and most cordial manner. Once more the debate sank to a low and vulgar level, when Mr. Tottenham rose to present the view of the incorrigible class to which he belongs. The service which the member for Leitrim does to the Irish cause is incalculable. The look of brutal arrogance, the pompous walk, the silly superciliousness, all explain, to even an Englishmen, the loathing in which men of this class are held in Ireland. There is a current story about Mr. Tottenham which was told me by an Englishman, and illustrates the general feeling towards him. He was walking—so the tale goes—down Portland place, one of the finest streets in London, when a wag went up to him and asked him who was the owner of such a house. "How do I know," asked Mr. Tottenham, with a haughty frown. "Who owns the next house?" Mr. Tottenham declared his ignorance with a frown that was even still haughtier, and when the importunate stranger asked him as to the ownership of yet a third dwelling, his small stock of patience gave way, and he asked why the —— he was annoyed with those questions? "Because," said the stranger with a winning smile, "I thought from your walk that you owned the whole street and would therefore be able of course to tell who lived in each house." To-day Mr. Tottenham laboured away at the old Orange arguments, and everybody was so slightly impressed that scarcely a word was listened to, and even his own side had not an encouraging cheer, not even the faintest of "hear, hears," with which to cheer his lonely and desolate way. Even Mr. King-Harman, though he looked daggers, and was arrayed as to his forehead in tempestuous thunderclouds, was sombre and silent, and in the doubtful contingency of Mr. Tottenham having any powers of historic reflection, he must have felt how abject, forlorn, morally and politically bankrupt, was the cause he championed.

This disappearance of the broken-down advocate of ascendancy had its tragic side. Sir Patrick O'Brien supplied the correlative quality of farce. He wandered wildly over every topic but the amendment, and when someone called him to order he paused, and in solemn tones declared, "Sir, I am not in order"—a statement with which members showed their concurrence by laughing for full three minutes. The honourable baronet exceeded his usual powers of metaphor by describing Mr. Kenny as "the young sea-serpent from Clare." Sir Arthur Otway, the Chairman, could not stand this, and admonished Sir Patrick who thereupon replied, "Sir, I withdraw the young sea-serpent." Then he announced that he "heard a twinkler" on the opposite benches, which proves how acute are Sir Patrick's powers of hearing, and, when the whole house was convulsed with delight at these and other gems of speech, he withered his opponents by remarking that nothing was easier than to try to stifle a disagreeable speech by sickly smiles. On the whole, Sir Patrick's was the speech of the debate. Mr. Gladstone's face while it was being delivered was a study. If, as the hon. baronet said was possible, it is to be his last speech in the House, he may at least console himself with the knowledge that it will not be forgotten by those whose privilege it was to hear him.

Then, Mr. Brodrick, in his perky and chirrupy way, announced that he intended to fulfil his promise of going to a division, and at once there was a notable exodus of members from his own side. Sir