

dead must be taken as, at least, approximations. But, even as approximations, many of these calamities enter into serious competition with war as destroyers of property and life. Referring to the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, we told how Mulhall's table of the most destructive earthquakes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (in his *Dictionary of Statistics*) opens with a record (estimate) of 190,000 deaths at Yeddo (Japan) in 1793, and closes with the 2000 victims of the great 'shake' at Ischia (in the Bay of Naples) in 1833. But the great statistician's list (as we then pointed out) is curiously incomplete. No mention, for instance, is made of the 12,000 souls who were dissolved from their partnership with 12,000 bodies when Caracás was pounded to bits on March 12, 1812; nor of the (estimated) 10,000 victims of the Manila 'quakes' of July, 1863; nor of the 25,000 lives (more or less) that were destroyed on August 13-15, 1868, when five cities and a number of towns and villages in Ecuador and Peru were pulled to pieces by earth-waves and tidal waves that wrought like regiments of demon Sampsons. Neither is there any record in the *Dictionary of Statistics* regarding the great convulsion of Krakatoa (1883), with its estimated death-roll of 36,500, nor of that of Nippon Island (1891), with its round number tale of 10,000 dead. In reading of the destruction wrought by seismic forces, it is some comfort to learn, on the authority of the astronomer Herschel, that earthquakes are unavoidable and (in a sense) 'necessary incidents in a vast system of action to which we owe the ground we stand upon—the very land we inhabit, without which neither man, beast, nor bird would have a place for their existence, and the world would be a habitation of nothing but fishes.' The world is fitted by Providence for human habitation not alone by the slow action by which the glacier grinds down the valleys and the drip-drip of rain and the fanning of wind and the nipping of frost rounds the hills, but likewise by the sudden shock of seismic forces that lift the ocean beds and crack the backbones of the hills. Puny man is powerless when caught in the clash of these vast forces when at play. And, though difficult in many instances to act upon, the only method of avoiding, as far as may be, such destruction of human life as was witnessed in Sicily and Calabria, seems to be to accept the advice of those scientists who have urged upon the Italian Government the prevention of town and city building within the regions that have so long been scourged by earthquakes.

## Notes

### Spiritism

Our articles on spiritism (in our issues of December 10 and December 17) have elicited sundry letters of encouragement and inquiry from learned ecclesiastics both in Australia and New Zealand. One of the ablest, most learned, and most prudent and experienced ecclesiastics in Australia—one whose name is mentioned with respect throughout both the Commonwealth and this Dominion—in the course of an over-kind commendation of the articles in question, says in part: 'I have met with some sad cases of the evils of this wretched superstition, and I fully agree with you that such Catholic works as you refer to, do tenfold more harm than good.' This learned and well-known churchman—*clarum et venerabile nomen*—urges us to 'tuck up (our) sleeves and set to work (on a book on spiritism), *in nomine Domini*.' Such a book is still in our hopes, although we cannot at present see how the leisure time for such a work is to be snatched from among the many occupations and preoccupations of a Catholic editor's life in these countries. However, while awaiting an opening for the fuller exposition of our views and convictions on mediumistic spiritism, we may from time to time give our readers some brief and casual glimpses into the methods of this strange occupation. On pages 9-11 of this issue we raise a corner of the curtain that conceals from the uninitiated the tricks and artifices and stratagems of what many spiritists claim to be the crowning evidence of the reality of their 'manifestations'—namely the so-called 'spirit photography.' There was only one Witch of Endor, and one re-appearing Saul—who, by the way, behaved with a dignity becoming himself and the solemnity of death. But sundry Catholic writers ask us to believe that the world of demons is from moment to moment at the beck and call of ten thousand ungrammatical and money-seeking mediums, or that our dead are daily swarming, at the word of command, into frowsy parlors in the back streets of practically every town and village, for no better object than to talk platitudinous nonsense or wheezy flummery, or to indulge in rough horse-play with chairs and tables. The halo of the preter-

natural thus cast around the mediumistic profession has been, to our knowledge, and to the knowledge of others of our fellow-clergy, the means of sending many foolish Catholic women to the unwholesome associations of the séance parlor. A very different version of the facts of séances would have been given by the writers referred to, if they had but made themselves acquainted with the cheats and manoeuvres of the mediumistic charlatan, who is *Parthis mendacior*, a past-master in the ungentle but more or less profitable art of Huiabug.

### Not from a Catholic School

Here is an extract from a recent issue of the *Melbourne Argus*:—

'Kilmore, Saturday.—At the court of petty sessions this morning, before Messrs. P. Skehan and L. J. McDougall, J.P.'s, a juvenile witness in an assault case, named Ray Wade, aged 13, was asked what would happen to him if he did not tell the truth, and the boy said that he did not know.

—'Mr. McNab (who was defending the case).—Do you know what God is?—No, I don't.

'Mr. Skehan (chairman).—Do you mean to say that you do not know who God is?—No, I don't know who He is. (Sensation.)

'Mr. McNab contended that the boy's evidence was useless, seeing that he did not know his Creator. (To the boy).—Do you know what will happen to you if you tell lies in the witness-box?

'The Boy.—No, I don't know anything about God or what will happen to me.'

We have had, within the past two years, a few similar cases before the New Zealand courts. And the Anglican Bishop of Auckland avers that such appalling ignorance of religious truth is far more common among us than most people are willing to suppose. It is hardly necessary to say that such a condition of things could not be found among children educated in our Catholic schools. It is a joint product of godless State schools and careless homes.

### Urging Barbarian Warfare

As our eyes travelled over the pages of *The World To-day*, we came across a curious plea for a return to the practice of the torture, wholesale slaughter of combatants and non-combatants, and the other barbarities of warfare which it took the Church so many centuries of strenuous endeavor to abolish. This plea for savagery in warfare forms the theme of an article (pp. 1136-8) by Arthur H. Dutton, lately a lieutenant in the United States Navy. Ex-Lieutenant Dutton comes of a fighting ancestry, he is a veteran of two wars, and is described by the editor of *The World To-day* as 'an ardent advocate of the permanent establishment of universal peace and general disarmament of nations.' It is folly, says the Ex-Lieutenant (p. 1137) for the nations to delude themselves into the notion 'that the way to promote peace is to minimise the rigors of war. . . . The more humane war is made, the more nations will indulge in it. The more barbarous it is made, the sooner will mankind awaken to its injustice and its absurdity, and banish it from the earth.' He urges, in all seriousness, a conference of the nations to abolish the international war-laws which it took Christian sentiment such long ages to build up. He demands that war shall 'be henceforth waged with rules until it vanishes. Make it,' says he, 'a deadly struggle, too horrible to contemplate.' He suggests the following as the methods of the warfare of the future:—

1. Take no prisoners. Put all the enemy to the sword. Torture and maim at will.

2. Slay the old, the feeble, and the infants. Reduce the strong, both male and female, to slavery when desired for public or private labor. Separate the families.

3. Turn over captured cities, towns, and villages to the victorious soldiery, to pillage, ravish, and burn.

4. Devastate the fields, destroy all machinery and improvements of every kind not needed by the victors for their own use.

5. Use explosive bullets; poison the springs and wells after passing through the conquered country.

6. Torture to death, by the most barbaric processes that can be devised, the public officials of the conquered country, particularly those responsible for causing the war.

7. Enemy's ships captured to be looted and then sunk or burned with all hands.

8. Spare nothing in the conquered territory save what the victors want and such things as are of permanent value to art, science, and literature of the world in general. Take these away. Leave the conquered country a wilderness, to be recultivated and rebuilt only by the slave labor of its humbled people for the benefit of their conquerors. In a word, obliterate the defeated nation.'

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