

repudiation of the Rev. Mr. Wood's narrowness, and as a unanimous verdict for the *Tablet* on the main points in issue in the recent controversy.

### The Faith in Portugal

On the outbreak of the Portuguese revolution, almost exactly two years ago, we pointed out that owing to the extent to which the clergy had been in bondage to the State there was considerable slackness in religious matters; and we expressed the view that on the whole and in the long run the persecution and trial involved in the upheaval would rather benefit the Church in Portugal, by putting stiffening into the backbone and iron into the blood of Portuguese Catholics. That it is, slowly perhaps but surely, working out this result would seem tolerably clear, if the following account is a true picture of the observance of Holy Week last Easter time. It is contributed by a Lisbon correspondent—Jayme Victor—to *America*, a journal whose correspondents are usually unimpeachably reliable. The communication was delayed in transmission, and is therefore somewhat belated; but it is emphatically one of those items of news which are better late than not at all.

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'Religion persecuted,' says the *America* correspondent, 'means religion triumphant. Still another time has the old proverb not failed of fulfilment, as we see in the observance of Holy Week not only in the capital but also in the provinces. I wish to make the following assertions in the most absolute manner: (1) Never before had the churches of Lisbon, Oporto, and elsewhere seen such throngs of worshippers. (2) Never had I noticed in former years so much respect and decorum during the sacred ceremonies. (3) Many persons who had not been accustomed to assist at church services were in attendance this year. (4) On Holy Thursday and Good Friday very few failed to wear black or at least raiment of a subdued hue. (5) Special religious exercises at the expense of private individuals were more numerous and more imposing than in former years. (6) On Holy Thursday no fewer than eight thousand received the Holy Communion in the churches and chapels of Lisbon. The most extraordinary thing of all, however, was that the State, the constitutional Government of the Republic, associated itself with the Catholic majority and made civil holidays of the last three days of Holy Week. No public school was in session, no Government office open, and the banking and commercial houses very generally kept their doors closed. What caused wonderment was that there was no breach of the public peace through hostility to religion; for in former times street riots and brawls were started by irreligious ruffians through contempt for the faith and the outward manifestation of it. The Bishop of Vizeu officiated in the cathedral of the patriarchate, where, to the surprise of the faithful, he was assisted in the sacred ceremonies by the students of the Irish and English colleges. On Holy Thursday, the streets were alive with people who were out visiting the Repositories. All social classes were represented, and military uniforms were a conspicuous element in the throng. Now, what does all this mean? That there is a revival of faith? Perhaps.'

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This writer's view is strongly confirmed by the correspondent of the *Catholic Times*. 'Whatever their apathy in the past,' writes the latter, 'it is certain that the present persecution is thoroughly arousing the Catholics in Portugal. Never have the churches been so full nor devotions so fervently followed, while the priests, many of them starving or entirely dependent on the not yet organised help of their parishioners, are showing a spirit which not even their friends credited them with.' The Church in Portugal is evidently on the up grade.

### The Origin of Life

During the week members of the British Association and sundry other scientists have been giving us, in charming variety, views and theories as to the

origin of life. 'Professor Minchin,' we are told, 'professor of protozoology, stated that the chromatin in the nucleus (i.e., the tingible matter in the controlling centre of a cell) was the primitive living substance.' 'Professor Wager, botanist, expressed the opinion that the blue-green algae cell [the algae are aquatic flowerless plants] stood for the birth of life. Cytoplasm was the original cell matter.' Dr. Haldane criticised both of these views—and so the highly learned and utterly inconclusive discussion went on. The amount of truly valuable formation conveyed in some of these high-sounding statements may be ascertained if one takes the trouble to look up exact definitions of the terms used. Let us take, for example, the statement, 'Cytoplasm is the original cell matter.' You look up 'cytoplasm' in your dictionary of scientific terms, and you are invited to 'see Protoplasm'; and you find that 'protoplasm' is defined as 'primitive organic cell-matter.' So that Professor Wager's statement amounts to this: that 'primitive organic cell-matter is the original cell matter,' which is doubtless true; but there needs no ghost from the dead nor pundit from the British Association to tell us that.

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There is, of course, no harm in all this elaborate speculation and theorising as to the physical basis of life so long as the statements put forth are not mistaken for facts, but are clearly and frankly recognised as mere theory. Facts are matters of observation; theories and hypotheses are matters of inference and deduction. The former may scarcely admit of doubt; the latter may rise to no higher level than that of a pious opinion, and are liable, at any moment, to be completely upset by facts newly come to light. Dr. Bertram Windle, F.R.S., whose scientific attainments are beyond question, gives us, in one of his recent works, a pointed and pertinent illustration of the extent of our ignorance, and of the supreme foolishness of dogmatism on such subjects; and his illustration bears on the precise question under discussion by the British Association. 'There is nothing,' he says, 'on which greater pains and study have been expended than on the structure and physiology of the cell, and, to us as Catholics, I may add that it is matter of congratulation that some of the most important and fruitful of this work has been done in the University of Louvain. It is a small thing—the cell. It might have been supposed by the casual observer that no very great amount of labor would be necessary to clear up all that could possibly be known of such a very limited field of investigation. Yet after so many years of work, after the unceasing toil of hundreds of observers in all parts of the world, the leading authority on the subject finds himself compelled to write: "The recent advance of discovery has not tended to simplify our conceptions of cell-life, but has rather led to an emphasised sense of the diversity and complexity of its problems."'

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'The sea (continued Dr. Windle) by the side of which Sir Isaac Newton picked up his pebbles is a much greater one than even he imagined, and the pebbles which remain to be picked up are a million for every one on which a discoverer has as yet laid his hand. How can we, then, in the presence of such a confession of ignorance, feel any great confidence in the foundation or longevity of a scientific theory when we know not the day in which some new pebble may not be picked up which will shatter that theory into fragments, as that fine pebble radium has shattered so many pre-existing views? We cannot understand the flower from the crannied wall, nor even grasp the secrets of one of the many million cells of which it is built up; and it is improbable that future generations will succeed in clearing up the mysteries which elude our grasp. But till all these have been cleared up it is hard to say that any scientific hypothesis is irrefutably established.'

It still remains that back of the 'cytoplasm,' back of the 'blue-green algae cell,' back of any and every form of primitive organic matter, there is something which the dissecting knife cannot touch and which cannot be found in the crucible. Tennyson was right