

proportion as they are warmly devoted or coldly affected towards the Pope, their spiritual chief, and the Vicar of Christ on earth. If the wise men from a far country brought offerings to Christ at his birth, shall we not send something to His Vicar, whom He has appointed to represent him, as a small token of our reverence and gratitude and affection.

LAIC.

HOW A PROTESTANT LOOKS ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

A CORRESPONDENT who signs himself "A Protestant Republican" contributes this bit of good sense to the columns of the 'New York Tribune':

"I was formerly a warm advocate of the free school system, but my views have undergone a radical change.

"Argue about it as we may, the system is a great injustice to the Catholics. From their point of view it is more unjustifiable than would be a union of Church and State. The relation of the teacher and scholar is far too sacred and delicate to be left to the manipulations of coarse and selfish politicians. I have studied the system critically for 25 years; and during that time I have seen so many unworthy teachers appointed and preferred, and so many good ones discouraged and driven from the profession, that I am well nigh disgusted with the whole thing. There are probably in round numbers, 100,000 teachers in the United States. Their office is essentially a political one. All the politicians want is to appoint their friends and favorites to these places, erect the school buildings, dictate the books, the course of study, in short, all the details; thus degrading the teacher to a mere machine. One can readily imagine how this army of officials, dependent upon a corrupt administration, might become a most formidable engine of injustice and oppression. To assist poor people in the education of their children is praiseworthy, but for the State to attempt to give a liberal education to all its citizens is too great a task. That we have too little education is self-evident, but we shall never get it in this country by compulsion. There is no reason why parents who are able should not provide for the education of their children the same as for food and clothing. There is no justice in compelling others to do it for them."

A PROTESTANT WRITER ON ITALY.

THE abolition of the religious institutions has been grievously felt throughout the country, and there are few even of the friends of Italian unity who have not had personal reason to experience its injustice. When "Days near Rome" appeared, one of the reviews regretted that its author should not rejoice that Italians were no longer called upon "to support swarms of idlers in vestments and hordes of sturdy beggars in rags." This is exactly what Italians with regard to the old ecclesiastical institutions were not called upon to do. The convents and monasteries were richly endowed; they had no need of being supported. It was, on the contrary, rather they who supported the needy, the sick, the helpless, and the blind among the people, who received their daily dole of bread and soup from the convent charities. When the marriage portions of the nuns were stolen by the Government, there was scarcely any family of the upper class throughout central Italy who did not suffer; for almost all had a sister, aunt, or cousin "in religion" upon whom a portion of £1000, £5000, or £10,000 had been bestowed, and who was thrown back helpless upon their hands, her fortune confiscated, and with an irregularly paid pension of a few pence a day, quite insufficient for the most miserable subsistence. The English press is slow to see the injustice of these things when it affects other nations. It is strange that it should not see it as affecting Englishmen, as in the case of the large tract of land which was purchased by the Rev. E. Douglass upon the Esquiline, and which was confiscated by the government on the plea that it had been used for religious purposes. Those who declaim so loudly upon the advantages of Italian unity are often unaware of the extreme difference which exists between the people and the language in the north and south of Italy—that a Venetian would not in the least be able to understand a Neapolitan, and vice versa. The difference often comes out when the absurd red-tapeism of the government is put into action. For instance, when the heat makes it impossible for the troops in Naples and Palermo to support their winter clothing, the soldiers shivering on the icy streets of Parma and Piacenza are put into brown holland, because throughout "United Italy" the same order must take effect.—"Augustus J. C. Hare's New Book on Italy."

RETURN OF THE POPE FROM AVIGNON.

In 1876 occurs the fifth centenary of the return of the Popes from Avignon to Rome, after an absence of seventy and more years, a period known in the mediæval history of the Eternal City as "The Babylonish Captivity." On October 18, 1876, Pope Gregory XI. arrived in Genoa on board a galley, manned by knights of the celebrated order of St. John of Jerusalem. St. Catherine of Siena had written many letters to the Pope entreating him to go back to the capital of the Church; and at last he yielded to her entreaties and to the inspiration of God. In 1376 she went towards France to meet the Pope; but in Genoa she stopped some days in company with the Blessed Raymond, a Dominican, who was her confessor. They stayed in the house of Madam Orietta, a most pious and noble widow, and the mother of two sons, one of whom took the name of Centurione, and became the founder of the illustrious family of that name which still exists in Genoa. The house in which the saint remained during these days has been destroyed and an oratory built over it, which is dedicated to her. On October 18 the Pope arrived. He was met by several priests and ecclesiastics from Rome who endeavored to per-

suade him not to proceed on his journey, as they declared it might prove dangerous to him. The Pope, who was much agitated by their representations, insisted upon seeing St. Catherine and went privately and in disguise to the house where she was staying. St. Catherine comforted him and assured him that no danger would attend his return to the capital. He was much struck by her confidence, and after waiting eight days in Genoa, set out on his journey and reached Rome five days later. The Italian Catholics propose keeping the centenary of this most important event with much solemnity, and it is even thought that it will be celebrated beyond the city of Rome by the Catholics of all nations.—'Catholic Review.'

FLORENCE THE FAIR.

THE radiant loveliness of the country immediately around Florence renders it the most delightful of all Italian cities for a spring residence, and no one who has once seen the glorious luxuriance of the flowers which cover its fields and gardens, and lie in masses for sale, on the broad gray basements of its old palaces can ever forget them. May is perhaps the most perfect month for Florence. In winter the ice laden winds from the Apennines blow bitterly down the valley of the Arno. Forsyth mentions that they can scarcely conceive how people can live at Florence in the winter, or how they can die there in summer. Florence has been far less modernised than Rome since the change of government; and though during the short residence there of the Sardinian Court, the magnificent old walls were destroyed, to the great injury of the place, with the towers which Varchie describes as "encircling the city like a garland," several beneficial additions were introduced. Conservatism is a natural part of the Florentine character, and there is scarcely the site of an old building or a house once inhabited by any eminent person which is not marked by an inscription. The galleries and museums, due for the most part to the Medici, and after them to the Austrian Grand-dukes, are nobly kept up, and liberally thrown open. Their treasures are inexhaustible, and almost every taste may be satisfied there. In the galleries of Uffizi and Pitti alone a walk of several miles may be taken on a wet day entirely under cover, and through an avenue of art treasures the whole way. When we add to these attractions the proverbially charming, genial, honest, simple character of the Tuscan people, we feel that it would be impossible to find a pleasanter residence than Florence in autumn and spring. "Every line, every road, every gable, every tower, has some story of the past present in it. Every tress that sounds is a chronicle; every bridge that unites the two banks of the river unites the crowds of the living with the heroism of the dead." To those who have not been much abroad it will be sufficient amusement to sit for a time in the beautiful Loggia de' Lanzi, if it is only for the sake of watching the variations of the fluctuating crowd in the Piazza beneath. The predominance of males is striking. Hundreds of men stand here for hours as if they had nothing else to do, talking ceaselessly in deep Tuscan tones. Many who are wrapped in long cloaks, thrown over one shoulder and lined with green, look as if they had stepped out of the old pictures in the palace above. Sitting here we should meditate on the various strange phases of Florentine history of which this Piazza has been the scene.

ALTITUDE AT WHICH MAN CAN LIVE.

THERE has been a great deal of discussion as to the altitude at which human beings can exist, and Mr. Glaisher himself can tell us as much about it as anybody. In July, 1862, he and Mr. Coxwell ascended in a balloon to the enormous elevation of 37,000 feet. "Previous to the start, Mr. Glaisher's pulse stood at seventy-six beats a minute; Mr. Coxwell's seventy-four. At 17,000 feet the pulse of the former was at eighty-four, that of the latter at one hundred. At 19,000 feet Glaisher's hands and lips were quite blue, but not his face. At 21,000 feet he heard his heart beating, and his breathing became oppressed; at 29,000 feet he became senseless," notwithstanding which the aeronaut, in the interest of science, went up another 8000 feet, till he could no longer use his hands, and had to pull the strings of the valve with his teeth. Aerostats, who have to make no exertions, have, of course, a great advantage over members of the Alpine Club and those who trust their legs; even at 13,000 feet these climbers feel very uncomfortable; more so in the Alps, it seems, than elsewhere. At the monastery of St. Bernard, 8,117 feet high, the monks become asthmatic, and are compelled frequently to descend into the valley of the Rhine for anything but "a breath of fresh air," and at the end of ten years' service are obliged to give up their high living and come down to the usual level. At the same time, in South America, there are towns (such as Potosi) placed as high as the top of Mount Blanc, the inhabitants of which feel no inconvenience.

The highest inhabited spot in the world is, however, the Buddhist cloister of Hanle, in Tibet, where twenty-one priests live at an altitude of 16,500 feet. The brothers Seglagintweit, when they explored the glaciers in the same country, encamped at the highest altitude a European ever passed thenight. Even at the top of Mount Blanc, Professor Tyndall's guides found it very unpleasant to do this, though the Professor himself did not confess to feeling so bad as they. The highest mountain in the world is Mount Everest (Himalaya), 28,000 feet, and the condor has been seen "winging the blue air" 500 feet higher. The air, by the by, is not "blue," or else, as De Saussure pointed out, "the distant mountains, which are covered with snow, would appear blue also," its apparent color being due to the reflection of light. What light can do, and does, is marvellous; and not the least is its power of attraction to humanity.—'Chambers's Journal.'