

perhaps to be relieved by the incantations of Canidia and the Corybantian howl.'

The history of the past three hundred years furnishes abundant justification for even the hornet-sting in the tail of Disraeli's remarks. We recently gave some modern instances in point. Another contemporary instance is furnished by the July-September issue of the 'Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society' (vol. xx., nos. 7-9, 1904, p. 108). In the course of an article on 'The Development of West Africa,' the Rev. P. A. McDermott, C.S. Sp., of Onitsha (S. Nigeria), writes as follows on the 'Promiscuous Distribution of the Old Testament' :—

'But before I leave the question of polygamy, I cannot conscientiously omit to allude here, though with the utmost delicacy and the deepest respect for the motives that inspire it, to the practice, on the part of some religious societies, of the promiscuous and indiscriminate distribution of the books of the Old Testament. It is undeniable that it has greatly contributed to strengthen among those people and even to propagate polygamy. Now that they are learning how to read—and, unless in the very remote interior, you will rarely find a village without one or more young men able to do so—they will only be attracted to the reading of such of those numerous passages of the Old Testament as would tend almost to consecrate that practice in their untutored and naturally corrupt minds, unable yet to discriminate between the Old Testament in itself and the New Testament, by which it has been modified and supplemented, not to say corrected.'

We find the testimony given above borne out as to substance in Dr. Needham Cust's 'Missionary Methods' (pp. 38-39), as regards Lagos and Sierra Leone, in West Africa. Dr. Cust is himself a Protestant. He is, perhaps, the greatest living authority on non-Catholic mission-fields. And, curiously enough, he strenuously pleads for the recognition of the plurality of wives by Christian missionaries in all countries in which the practice is legally established. But he might easily plead in extenuation the example of sundry great 'Reformers' to which, no doubt, he attached uncommon weight. The Protestant writer Bax, in his 'German Society at the close of the Middle Ages,' says (p. 100) of Dr. Martin Luther 'He was opposed to divorce, though he did not forbid it, and recommended that a man should rather have a plurality of wives than that he should put away any of them.' In one of his sermons on the Pentateuch, given in his 'Collected Works' ('Saemmt. Werke,' xxxiii., 323-4) he says 'It is not forbidden that a man should have more than one wife. I would not forbid it to-day, albeit I would not advise it. . . . Yet neither would I condemn it.' In 1539 he adopted a far more decided attitude than one of mere passive tolerance towards polygamy: he permitted Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, to have two 'wives' simultaneously—Catherine of Saxony (his lawful spouse) and Marguerite de Stuhl. In return for this concession, Philip had piously promised to 'live and die more cheerfully in the cause of the Gospel' (that is, of Luther's new-fangled creed), 'and be more ready to undertake its defence. I engage,' he added, 'to perform, on my part, all that may be required of me in reason, whether as regards the property of convents, or matters of a similar description.' The bait took. Luther, Bucer, Melancthon, and five other Doctors of Divinity drew up, on December 7, 1539, the famous document acceding to Philip's request for a second partner of his joys and woes.

The permission for a polygamous union was given—so said these pious 'Reformers'—'that the glory of God may be promoted.' But they cautiously added: 'We are of opinion that it ought to be done secretly, that is to say, there should be none present beyond the contracting parties, and a few trustworthy persons,

who should be bound to secrecy.' The bigamous nuptials were celebrated by Melander, the sycophant and creature of the drunken, roystering, immoral Landgrave of Hesse. Some years ago a Paris newspaper contained this unique advertisement: 'A young man of agreeable presence, and desirous of getting married, would like to make the acquaintance of an aged and experienced gentleman who could dissuade him from taking the fatal step.' The 'experienced gentleman' who tied the bigamous slip-knot for Philip of Hesse was about the last man on earth to dissuade the uxorious Landgrave from his second 'fatal step.' On the contra-ry, as Humpty-Dumpty said in Looking-glass Land. The accommodating varlet (as the noted American Protestant scholar and divine, Dr. Starbuck, puts it) 'kept his master in good heart by marrying three wives without divorcing any.' When the magnitude of this scandal, so unexampled in Christendom, was brought home to them in a way that scared them for their 'cause,' Dr. Martin Bucer and Dr. Martin Luther, endeavored to show it under by what Dr. Starbuck calls a 'campaign of sanctified mendacity.' They planned a bold and public denial of the whole proceedings. Bucer—pleading that the Apostles and even Christ and God the Father were dissemblers!—said (Lenz, 175-80): 'So should we also not alone conceal from our enemies the truth wherewith they can hurt us, but also through antagonistic error turn them from it.' Luther stated his position with even greater frankness, as may be seen by reference to Lenz (372-7) and De Wette-Seidenmann (vi., 263-4). He contended that 'the private yea may remain a public nay, and vice-versa.' And at his conference with Hessian councillors at Eisenach in July, 1540, he laid it down as a working principle that a good, thumping lie is justifiable when told for the benefit of the 'Reformed' religion. 'What would it matter,' said he, 'even if one should, for some greater good, and for the sake of the Christian Church, come out with a good plump lie' ('eine gute starke Luege')? Here is the real origin of an immoral principle that is day after day laid to the charge of the Catholic Church—which wholly repudiates and abhors it—by well-meaning enthusiasts whose limited acquaintance with Reformation literature leaves them in blissful ignorance of its real source.

Chambers' 'Book of Days' (vol. ii., p. 669) tells how, at a later date, the Calvinistic clergy of Prussia surpassed Luther and his fellow-Doctors of Divinity by formally authorising Frederic William II. to have quite a little harem of 'three wives at the same time—Elizabeth of Brunswick, the Princess of Hesse, and the Countess of Eulhof. The authorisation granted by the divines was,' says Chambers, 'like that of Luther and his brethren, founded on the principle that it was better to contract an illegal marriage than to pursue habitually a course of immorality and error.' 'Strange as the facts appear,' says the same writer, 'they are perfectly authentic.' The untutored savages in the heart of the Dark Continent can therefore plead high 'Reformed' authority both for their simultaneous and their 'tandem' polygamy—alias, divorce. Some thirty years ago a naturalist in Medford (Massachusetts) accidentally let a few eggs of the gypsy moth get out of his control. The creature is now an expensive and dreaded pest in the Old Bay State, and people would give much to be rid of it. The principles affecting the marriage tie that were turned loose at the Reformation have, in an analogous way, produced the swarm of domestic and social evils that circle around the divorce-mill. The growth of these calamitous ills is no mere freak or 'break' of our time. It is the natural, foreseen, and inevitable outcome of the tampering with the unity and indissolubility of the marriage bond with which the Reformation both in Germany and in England was ushered in. The Catholic Church still remains what she has ever been, the real bulwark of domestic life, the fearless defender of woman's best and most sacred rights.