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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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"Our" Hospitals.

LAST Sunday was Hospital Sunday, and collections were made in the London churches and chapels for the relief of the sick—or rather, to put it more accurately, for the support of those public institutions in which the poorer sick are doctored gratis, and in which they sometimes suffer much of many physicians. This great concern of the various religious bodies for hospitals and their inmates is a very recent phenomenon. It started when the ministers found that preaching kingdom-come was falling a little flat, and when they saw the advisability of adding what they call "social Christianity" to the old program. But now that the matter *is* taken up the various places of worship engage once a year in a sort of charitable competition. Instead of obeying Christ—which is about the last thing a Christian ever contemplates—and keeping their charities private, they assure themselves beforehand of the utmost publicity. Not letting one hand know what the other does in this way is antiquated nonsense. Modern, up-to-date Christianity knows of many improvements (and practises them!) on the teachings and policy of its primitive Founder. And one of these improvements is to have your gifts published in a general list, so that those who give little may be shamed and those who give much may be glorified. For of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Hospital Sunday is also utilised by the preachers as a first-rate opportunity—considering the rattle of the collection-boxes—for blowing the trumpet of their faith; which is also in defiance of their Master's precepts. The occasion is marked by a perfect riot of self-congratulation. Pulpits and pews beam upon each other with proud benevolence. To listen to the sermons you would imagine that Christianity had invented charity, and pretty nearly every other virtue. Do we not hear indeed, from time to time, that the very word "humanity" was unknown before the Christian era? And is not the authority of Max Müller invoked to cover this cheap philological sophistry? As though the word "philanthropy"—the Greek form of "humanity"—is not at least as old as Plato; and as though so good a judge as Lord Bacon had not preferred it to the later Latinism!

One of last Sunday's preachers who got reported in the London papers was Canon Ainger, who held forth in the Temple Church, where some of the congregation must have been at least in a position to detect his inaccuracy. Canon Ainger referred to hospitals as "those noble institutions which, of all that had sprung out of their religion, were nearest and closest to the teaching and example of the Savior." Now we beg to remind this clergyman—upon whom we will not be *too* hard, for the sake of his editorial labors on Charles Lamb—that the "teaching and example" of his Savior were absolutely foreign to hospitals and all their ways. Jesus Christ never said a good word for doctors; on the contrary, he sneered at them. Nor did he recommend medicine or surgery. His one recipe for the cure of the sick was faith and prayer. Yet those who follow him in this respect are called Peculiar People, and are occasionally sent to prison as felons for doing so; while a Canon of the Church of England has the coolness to represent Jesus Christ as a special patron of hospitals—and it is a wonder he did not add dispensaries. A mad world, my masters! Yes, a mad world, indeed; where a very small part of the lunatics are in asylums, and a very small part of the rogues are in gaol.

When a man like Canon Ainger talks in this way, one is tempted to call every clergyman a professional liar. It is not true, and he must know it, that hospitals sprang out of his religion. Hospitals for men and women—yes, and even hospitals for animals—existed in India hundreds of years before Jesus Christ was born. That is, if he ever *was* born. Public provision was made for the sick in ancient Egypt. Every quarter of Pagan Rome had its *archiater*, or paid medical officer, whose function it was to attend to the sick. And some of us think to-day that, if hospitals are to exist at all, they should be municipalised. In Greece the Asclepions, dedicated to Æsculapius the god of healing, were asylums for the sick, and schools of medical instruction before medicine assumed a scientific character. They were always situated on salubrious spots, and near thermal springs or medicinal fountains. Access was free to all, and the priests subsisted on voluntary oblations. "As asylums," Dr. John Watson says, "the temples bore no inapt resemblance to the hospitals and infirmaries of modern times; into which, in fact, some of them were ultimately converted."

Christianity did not invent charity, and it did not originate hospitals; in fact, it took a thousand years to improve ever so little upon the example of its predecessors. The truth is that the hospital system does not depend upon religion at all, but upon medical science; and hospitals are multiplied and enlarged as the medical profession grows more numerous and powerful. Much of what passes for charity is disguised professionalism. The hospitals are the great practice-grounds for the doctors, who do *not* attend there for nothing, but for the acquisition of experience, skill, and dexterity, that may be turned to profit in the treatment of rich patients. This is an aspect of the case which the thoughtful public should bear in mind, in spite of the superficial plaudits of the clergy, who are also looking after *their* professional interests.

Now let us see what the Christian Churches in London really do contribute to the hospitals. Seven thousand patients are treated daily as in-patients or out-patients. Multiply this number by the days of the year, and what a vast army of the more or less "unfit" is realised! Yet only £38,000 is collected in all the churches and chapels. According to Archdeacon Sinclair, this represents one halfpenny per head for the five million inhabitants of London. But it really represents a penny three-farthings per head. Yet when this gentleman's arithmetic is corrected, what is there to boast of? Less than twopence each all round! And they call heaven and earth to witness their unparalleled bounty! For verily the springs of charity would run quite dry without their wonderful religion!

Archdeacon Sinclair had the candor to remark that the slenderness of this contribution towards the maintenance of the hospitals was "a grave accusation against the Christianity of London." We quite agree with him; not because we expect Christians to be more charitable than other people, but because of the enormous pretensions they make to superiority. They are the most pharisaic religionists on earth; ridiculously belauding their own faith, and malignantly vilifying every other. They recognise no good outside their own fold, and they lay claim to all the conquests of civilisation and humanity, after resisting them until opposition became not only futile but contemptible. It is this feature of Christianity that most raises the gorge of the heathen and the unbelievers.

G. W. FOOTE.

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A Real Secular Reformer.

(Concluded from page 387.)

WE designate Robert Owen a real Secular reformer because in all his efforts for human improvement he relied upon mundane agencies and adopted the Secular method to obtain both individual and national advancement. As we pointed out in our article last week, he never resorted to Christianity to aid him in his work of reform. Indeed, amongst Secularists to-day there cannot probably be found a more determined and outspoken antagonist to the errors of the Christian faith than was Robert Owen. His writings abound with proofs of this statement. The following are his own words, which we have taken from volume i. of his publication, *The New Moral World*:—

> "I proclaim that ignorance and error, crime and folly, had their source in the different religions of the world. .....Religion destroys the rational faculties of the human race.....Through the natural effect of these vicious institutions of the priesthood, acting and re-acting continually upon human nature, they are also calculated, as well as if they were devised for the purpose, to constitute a weak, artificial, heartless, miserable condition of human society. The Christian customs cannot, therefore, be intended to be the practice of the human race when they shall acquire sufficient experience to become rational creatures.....It [Christianity] supposes that we have been formed with the power, by our own will, to believe or not to believe what is presented to our mind; which is contrary to fact.....No sect of religionists has mental charity or genuine kind feelings for those who possess other and opposing notions of religion, or for those who are compelled to believe that all mysterious religions are founded in deception.....During fifty years I have been actively engaged in opposing the religions of faith in things unseen and unknown, and the cruel, unjust, horrid, and irrational state of society which these religions alone could have produced" (pp. 44, 84, 107, 193, and 225).

Of course, the above excerpts refer to the theological religions of the world. Before his death Owen started a "Society of Rational Religionists," but its principles were all opposed to Christianity. He also became a kind of Spiritualist; still, to the final hour of his life he regarded all supernatural religions as "the bane of humanity, and the cause of all its crimes, irrationalities, absurdities, and sufferings."

A mind thus free from the follies and retarding influences of theology was necessary for directing the work of a genuine Secular reformer, which undoubtedly Robert Owen was. Believing as he did that human character depended for its excellence or otherwise upon proper education and the conditions of environment, he directed his attention to the training of the young and to improving the state of society in which they were placed. He knew that, as a rule, children are not devout, nor do they take kindly to religious or theological instruction. Considering the often mysterious and transcendental character of such training, it is not more to be wondered at that the young should dislike it than that their youthful energies should be perverted and weakened by compelling them to undergo the torture of a course of metaphysics. That they are curious and inquisitive, we all know; but this curiosity is really the spur and incentive to the acquisition of knowledge which will lead them to profit by the monitions of experience. Manifestly, there is, as the adage says, "no royal road to learning," and when we refer an inquiring child to the erroneous cosmogony of the first chapters of Genesis we do no other than imprint upon its mind a series of ideas of a prejudicial nature, which, if once clearly fastened on that mind, it may evermore be almost impossible to modify, although science, criticism, and reason should unite—as we think they do—in affirming that the Mosaic cosmogony has no foundation in reason or just claim upon the intellectual assent. We bend the twig when young, and subsequently struggle in vain to straighten the twisted and deformed tree. Children ought not to have creeds or catechisms forced upon them; their lives should be a pleasure, and they should be carefully preserved from everything of a saddening or melancholy nature. No sane person will, we think, pretend that theology is a cheerful study; it is rather the reverse, and hence we think that the young can derive no possible satisfaction from the study of man's alleged original fall from righteousness, his alleged perversity, his sins against Deity, and that Deity's acts of vengeance for those offences. Owen thought that the time would come when mankind would find it hard to believe that their precursors were so irrational in their treatment of the young as to feed them with meats that are only proper for maturity. At present those who recognise the absurdity of such a proceeding are comparatively few, but they compensate for this in depth of thought and solidity of judgment; and we are confident that every year which elapses is bringing society nearer to the perception of the fact that neither considerations of Divinity nor of heaven or hell are at all the proper pabulum, or food, for the youthful mind. On the other hand, the conviction is steadily gaining ground that the proper work of the educationalist is to prepare his pupils for the great battle of life, to strengthen the understandings of those entrusted to his care in all that is essential to the making of men and women fit to inhabit this beautiful earth, and to transmit to their posterity a nobler heritage than that previously acquired by themselves.

To thoroughly understand the great services which Robert Owen rendered in emancipating the rising generation from the state of physical and moral degradation to which theologians and their teachings have reduced them, it is only necessary to consider the conditions of the young when this Secular reformer commenced his work. Children as young as six years old were forced to labor, and some of them were compelled to work fourteen hours a day. Further, they were submitted to heartrending cruelty and slow starvation which would "make the annals of slavery pale." Mr. John Fielden, who had personally investigated the apprentice system, tells us "that they were flogged, fettered, and tortured in the most exquisite refinement of cruelty; that they were in many cases starved to the bone, while flogged to their work, and that even in some instances they were driven to commit suicide to evade the cruelties of a world in which, though born to it so recently, their happiest moments had been passed in the garb and coercion of a workhouse." "It is," says Mr. Balmforth, "a curious commentary on our boasted humanity that the hardships and abominations of the apprenticeship system were only brought to light by the foulness and disease which emanated from the dens in which the children were worked and housed." (See *Social and Political Pioneers*, pp. 72 and 73.) Side by side with this cruelty and the poisonous atmosphere in which the children had to exist there was a deplorable amount of juvenile ignorance. In 1803 the only instruction children received was in Sunday schools. The teaching given there was, we are told, very "limited and primitive." It was feared that the "inferior orders" would become educated "above their station," and so "imbibe notions of pride." Thus theology was then, as it is now, the persistent enemy to educational progress.

It was to remedy these terrible evils, to which the rising generation were victims, that Robert Owen directed his attention. The first thing he did at New Lanark was to improve the surrounding conditions of the people. He found that they "lived almost without control—in habits of vice, poverty, idleness, debt, and destitution." Owen, says the author of *Social and Political Pioneers*, "immediately began a thorough reform." He reduced the temptation to drunkenness and all vice; he urged wives to make their homes so comfortable that their attractions for husbands should be greater than those of the public-houses; that the age at which children were employed should be raised to eight or ten years; and that the village school be open to all from the age of five without any charge. Owen was the first to establish infant schools in Great Britain. He saw their necessity in the formation of good characters. His method of instruction was one of love, not fear; kindness, not punishment. With him education was made pleasant by pictures, games, music, singing, and dancing. Thus the emotions were cultivated without the sacrifice of reason.

Unfortunately, Owen did not live to see the complete triumph of his principles. Christian bigotry was his greatest foe. Simply because he was a Secular reformer

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he was ignored by the professed followers of Christ. All education that did not include religious dogmas was severely condemned. Christian professors said plainly that the children of the poor were not to be taught to write or cipher. It would render "them discontented and unhappy in their lot." "Instead of making them good servants," education "would render them fractious and refractory; it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books, and publications against Christianity." This will give the reader some idea of the kind of Christian opposition a Secular reformer in Owen's time had to encounter; and it will also explain to a rational mind why Secular principles have been comparatively slow in their development. It is, however, a great consolation to us to know that much of the theological bigotry of the past has been overcome by the power of Freethought, and we hope and believe that within the next few decades Secularism will be still more victorious over the stagnating influence of Christian theology. CHARLES WATTS.

The Pharisaic Religious Press.

THE *Rock*, in a recent issue, publishes a leader on "The Indecency of the Daily Press." The daily press will probably survive the accusation, and is hardly likely to mend its ways—should that be necessary—in consequence of the censure of the *Rock*. That ultra-Protestant journal, following other Evangelical prints, has taken upon itself to denounce the publication of extended reports of divorce proceedings. Why it should do so just now is obvious. At the time when its leader was published there had terminated a divorce suit which had occupied the attention of the Court *ad nauseam* for an exceptionally long period. As the public may remember, it was a case in which the principal parties were a clergyman, his wife, and a churchwarden. The clergyman obtained a divorce, the churchwarden was assessed in heavy damages, and the clergyman's wife was ordered to pay the costs of her husband and another party to the suit out of her separate estate. All the parties were church people, and the evidence, to say the least of it, was unsavory. Had it been one of those aristocratic, or military, or theatrical causes which unhappily are not infrequent, the religious press would have probably abstained from comment. These pious journals would have passed by with no further demonstration than uplifted hands and eyes. But this divorce suit, during its fifteen days' hearing, revealed a specially rotten state of things in a little church circle. And so the religious press, last week and the week before, endeavored to divert attention from the case itself by roundly abusing the daily press for publishing reports. As if, indeed, church people, when they are found out, are entitled to a special immunity in regard to the publicity of their misdeeds.

No particular interest attaches to the story told in the Divorce Court. There are probably infinitely worse cases occurring in religious circles which never see the light. The only point calling for notice is the Pharisaic tone adopted by the Christian weeklies. They don't cast stones at the woman taken in adultery, or the pious church official who seduced her, but at the press which reports—and in a skilfully-guarded fashion, too—the main features that came out in evidence. And they put on an air of offended modesty, and make such protestations on behalf of decency in print that one would never think that they are engaged, for all they are worth, in pushing the circulation of the Holy—and, to some extent, dirty—Scriptures.

In a portentous style, the *Rock* commences its leader with the words: "A very serious suggestion is made, and deliberately made, in the above heading"—namely, "The Indecency of the Daily Press." Very graciously, it goes on to say, the English daily press, as a whole, is a pattern to the world. But there is a "very serious blemish" in it, and this, of course, as we quite expected, is disclosed in the reports of divorce cases, and especially of the church case which has just been tried. "Scarcely a paper we have seen has not related some incidents which should never find mention in journals which, by their general high character, have free admittance to our homes." Well, the daily press didn't invent the incidents. It did its best to cloak them over, short of suppressing what the public expect, if they are not entitled, to know. Surely the censure of the *Rock*, and the other religious papers, should be visited upon those of its own Church who, in the retirement of the vicarage grounds, and in the vicarage itself, enacted all that has been disclosed. According to the *Rock*, no excuse is available for "sullying the pages of our daily press with gross details which, so far from serving any good purpose, can only have a demoralising influence, all the more dangerous because a respectable daily paper finds free circulation amongst all sections and all ages of the community."

This is all very fine, in a Pharisaic kind of way, but it wants a little examination. What does the *Rock* mean by "serving any good purpose"? An account of a murder, it might say, serves no good purpose; or the report of a railway smash, because that inspires travellers with ofttimes unnecessary terror; or of an inquest, because that may lead to gloomy thoughts; or, as recently, of a parson self-convicted of 120 frauds, because that may show what is possible in spite of religious training and professional preaching. The daily press takes things as they come; it is the brief chronicler of the times, and if the times are so much out of joint that church people, who are supposed to be examples to others, figure disgracefully in a public court, that is no fault of the public press, which, mildly as may be, records their misdoings. Who is to decide whether a good purpose is served? We can't allow the *Rock* to constitute itself a censor of what may or may not serve a useful purpose, and therefore what may or may not appear. If we did, that energetic paper might not only strike out in the press the mere mention of Young *v.* Young and Mintoft, but might go into the Law Courts and strike it off the cause-list, and then go further and censure the President of the Divorce Court for presuming to hear it. There is no limit to censorship of that kind if once its right of interference is allowed.

However much we may respect the *Rock*, we cannot admit its claim to dictate the amount of publicity, if any, which should be given to particular cases as they arise. That paper never fails to record in the fullest form all sorts of crimes, real or imaginary, alleged against Romish priests, monks, and nuns. If, on the other hand, Mr. Kensit were accused of walking off with the Primate's crozier, it would suppress disclosure of the appropriation as not likely to serve a useful purpose, though it might be only another instance of Mr. Kensit's removal of distasteful ecclesiastical "trinklements." Quite recently the *Rock* stretched the truth till it came near to absolute lying in its account of a Protestant outrage on a Roman Catholic procession at Peckham.

The main point is that the Church press has suddenly discovered a "grave evil" in its more widely circulated contemporaries consequent upon the aforesaid divorce suit. "The diffusion of admittedly impure and debasing literature demands our serious attention," says the *Rock*. "Such an evil is calculated to undo half the good which is done by our Sunday schools, and by the circulation of sound, pure literature. It is not exaggerating to denounce, as an enormous public danger, the inclusion in newspapers of matter which, if published in book-form or for stage production, would lead to suppression and perhaps prosecution."

We thank thee, O *Rock*, for that hyphenated term, "book-form." What about your filthy Old Testament? To use your own words, this accusation of ours is "deliberately made." We do not say that the Old Testament is entirely or designedly filthy. But filthy it is in parts, and that beyond all possible dispute. You say it is but the record of historical events, meaning thereby Hebrew traditions, though that does not cover the poetic and prophetic sections. But supposing it is mere history, where does it differ from the present-day newspaper reports of the Divorce Court? Why, only in its *naked, undisguised, unblushing obscenity*.

Where is the "useful purpose" served in half or a third or a fourth of these Hebrew narratives and allusions? The major portion convey no useful moral lesson. One does not need to specify the passages referred to, some of which are intolerably long as well

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as grossly obscene. They are picked out, Sunday after Sunday, by the boys in your boasted Sunday schools and shown to one another under the very noses of their silly, half-awake teachers. If there is a moral attaching to them, it is lost, and in all cases there is the vice of suggestion. They seem to be practically inseparable from the general text. But whether or not the Old Testament can be Bowdlerised, no real attempt to deal with it in that way is made. The Bible, with all its old Jewish filth, is pitched bodily and unexpurgated at the heads of children and youths arrived at puberty with absolute carelessness as to the consequences. Youths and maidens are commanded to read it and digest it, and they do—the parts which excite their youthful curiosity and growing thirst for sexual knowledge.

To the *Rock* and its fellow Pharisaic organs of the religious press one is impelled to say: Leave the daily press alone; it knows its own business better than you. At the best, your interference is impertinence. Put your own house in order. Overhaul your so-called Holy Writ. "Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye."

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Decay of Persecution.

(Continued from page 388.)

IN the primitive condition of mankind peace, as we understand it, is practically non-existent. In its place there exists a state of intertribal warfare, relieved only by periods during which a species of armed truce prevails. But the expectation of each man is to kill someone or be killed himself. All are so familiarised with pain and death that each will inflict either one or the other with little or no compunction. The stories one reads of the tortures and sports in vogue amongst savage races, the custom, not quite general, of killing all the members of a beaten tribe, show this much quite clearly, and serve to explain the origin of the (to us) brutal punishments inflicted for various offences.

Amongst ourselves, on the contrary, the conditions of life are such that pain in its extreme form is known chiefly by hearsay. Not one person in a thousand has ever witnessed a death by violence; nor is the sight of suffering as common as in previous ages. There is as a necessary result of these altered conditions a decided unwillingness to inflict pain, and a corresponding sense of uneasiness on witnessing it; while in early societies, where suffering in one form or another is the normal accompaniment of everyday life, there is far greater callousness shown at its presence.

Again, the mere development of the industrial and the decline of the military type of society brings about the development of a new set of feelings, or rather brings into the foreground a number of feelings that have hitherto been kept in subordination. In a military State the necessary amount of combination is chiefly secured either by coercion from within or pressure from without. In an industrial State there is a greater amount of individual initiative, greater personal independence, and the requisite organisation is secured either by growth or by mutual agreement. Although these two types may co-exist in the same society, yet they are the negation of each other, and it is simply impossible for people to engage in industrial pursuits, which necessarily involve the growth of a different set of feelings to those essential to war, without developing sympathies and opinions that materially modify their outlook of life in general.

In the history of any country of modern times there is enough evidence to show that the growth of toleration and the secularisation of politics are practically two aspects of the same general process. Day after day people find themselves brought into close personal contact with those whose opinions they hold, or are supposed to hold, in the utmost detestation. On the political or social platform they find themselves side by side with people who, while theoretically detestable in *one* direction, are practically admirable in all others. They find themselves fellow thinkers in the same council, fellow workers in the same movements, sharing in the same ideals, and participating in the same triumphs. Insensibly the standard of judgment alters. Instead of testing people by their speculative opinions concerning another order of existence, they are content to judge their fellows by their conduct here, and by their opinions of the life in which they have a common share, and of which they each bear a portion of the common burden. The strength of their social sympathies gradually overcomes the power of their supernatural differences, and these experiences, added to the peaceful feelings that are the normal accompaniments of industrial pursuits, inevitably weaken the sentiments from which the lust of persecution springs.

The complexity of modern life still further accentuates this process. Where the conditions of life are simple, and the experiences that one passes through are often repeated, conclusions are reached rapidly, and the opinions formed are not disturbed by observing that other people from exactly the same data have drawn an altogether different conclusion. Under such conditions opinions once formed are relatively unchangeable. A good illustration of this principle is seen in the case of uneducated people, who form opinions with a rapidity and express them with a dogmatism that is in striking contrast to one who takes a more comprehensive view of the subject under consideration. Experience, which makes far wider knowledge, also makes far greater caution in forming and expressing opinions, and greater respect for conclusions of an opposite character that others may have arrived at.

But—and it is here that scientific discoveries begin to play their part—as the view of life widens, when phenomena that appear so simple are shown to be really very complex and capable of a radically different interpretation, when people find themselves brought into contact with differences of opinion where they least expect to find them, and when it is further observed that these differences are yet accompanied by good and useful lives, there grows up a suspicion of one's own fallibility and a distrust of opinions that have hitherto been regarded as beyond the possibility of doubt. There is induced an almost unconscious revision of accepted beliefs, a greater readiness to be on the look out for error, and thus by many subtle causes there ensues a weakening of that spirit of dogmatism which, while it is one of the conditions of persecution, is at once the distinguishing feature of primitive savages and modern bigots.

But all this, while sufficient to account for the *nature* of punishments inflicted for heresy, does not explain their origin. This, I believe, is to be found in the view then held as to the relations of the individual to the social structure. In the modern sense of the words, individual rights and individual responsibilities can scarcely be said to exist in primitive societies. The individual exists far more for the benefit of the tribe than the tribe can be said to exist for the benefit of the individual. An important result of this view of the matter is that actions and opinions are judged from the standpoint of the whole of the body politic rather than from that of its individual members. There is a strong sense of corporate responsibility, the whole of the tribe being held more or less responsible for the conduct of each of its units. This sense of general responsibility is, of course, present to a greater or smaller extent with all societies, savage or civilised; only in the latter case it is an organic responsibility that refers to the conduct of life in this world, and not to a world concerning which we have no certain information, and which, for aught we know to the contrary, may not even exist.

The peculiar feature of uncivilised society is that this natural feeling of corporate responsibility is transferred to a region in which it has no legitimate application. If an individual holds an opinion that is unfavorable to the gods, or declines to perform certain services on behalf of the gods, he may excite their anger and call down punishment on the whole of the tribe; and this belief naturally excites a lively sense of resentment against such troublesome individuals. When a member of one savage tribe is injured by the member of another, no trouble is taken to find the offending party and have it out with him; any one of his fellow-tribesmen will do, and a vendetta is declared against the whole. There is a splendid impartiality about such

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an arrangement; and the uncivilised man conceives his god as acting in exactly the same manner, which is his way of paying a compliment to the deity. The heretic is, consequently, not merely a mistaken man; he is a socially injurious one. He may involve the whole society in punishment or destruction, and his suppression becomes a matter of social necessity. He must be thrown overboard, as the sailors did with Jonah, and for exactly the same reason.

This sense of corporate responsibility will be found to play a large part in the early history of all religions. It is to be found running right through the Bible, and undoubtedly had great weight with the early Christians. And it is this alone which for generations gave persecution an air of sacred duty, and enabled men and women who were otherwise admirable to take part in it. For the fact that so many good men and women aided and abetted the persecutions of past generations loses its air of paradox when we bear in mind that it was a logical effect of early religious opinions. As I have said, the heretic is not only one who is intellectually in error; he is the promulgator of opinions that will wreck the eternal happiness of all who may be influenced by him. He is a centre of spreading infection, and one who may cause the deity to withhold his favors from the society of which he is a part. It is thus that persecution takes on the air of a solemn obligation that a man owes to his fellows; it is in this manner that there are invoked in its interest all the feelings and sentiments that we otherwise associate with the most solemn of all social duties. In brief, unbelief is not under these conditions a matter between deity and the individual; it is a species of high treason towards the State, and is treated accordingly.

This state of things is gradually broken down by the growth of more accurate conceptions of the nature of individual and social responsibility, and also by the inevitable separation of social matters from theology. The State is seen to exist for the individual instead of the individual for the State, and this conception necessarily produces a marked change in our notions of individual and social responsibility. I myself, and not my neighbor, am responsible for whatever speculative opinions I may entertain; and, provided such opinions do not issue in actions that are socially injurious, society has no more collective concern with them than it has to decide what food I shall eat or what liquid I shall drink. And, finally, the growing exclusion of theology from political and social matters leads to the same result. While the selection and enforcement of religious opinions is believed to be part of the functions of the State, punishment of heresy is as natural as punishment for refusal to pay rates and taxes. With the separation of the two spheres, the picture of government enforcing theological opinions is a proceeding that must strike all by its incongruity. Religion is left to depend more and more upon its power of conviction, and the appeal to reason or to discussion inevitably produces a type of mind that is foreign to the idea of persecution.

In the growth of this altered conception of the nature of corporate responsibility we have, I believe, one of the main causes that have led to people looking upon persecution as little short of a crime. That a more diffused culture, the power of discussion, and the growth of more correct ideas concerning the operations of nature have played their part is undeniable; but it seems to me that they are secondary rather than primary causes of the change. As I have tried to show, the main causes of persecution are (1) the extension to the supernatural world of that sense of corporate responsibility which, excluding individual rights and responsibilities, conceives every opinion as socially injurious or beneficial, and punishes or rewards in accordance with that view; and (2) that state of primitive warfare which, habituating men to the sight of suffering, induces carelessness of the suffering of others, and thus gives rise to punishments of a brutal and bloodthirsty character. This spirit of persecution has declined in proportion to the growth of the status of the individual and the development of industrial life, the former fixing the direct responsibility for opinions; and the latter, by giving rise to the more peaceful and benevolent instincts, has rendered the sight of pain more unusual, and therefore has made its infliction more distasteful. Persecution is, unfortunately, far from dead; but then neither are militarism and its associated feelings. We are in a transitional state, and, although we still have with us the old type of mind as a reminder of less civilised times, it bids fair to become weaker and finally disappear from the face of civilised society.

C. COHEN.

A Century of Christian Charity!

AN INCOMPLETE LIST OF BLASPHEMY PROSECUTIONS AND SENTENCES ON FREETHINKERS DURING ONE HUNDRED YEARS IN THIS BOASTED LAND OF FREEDOM.

1794—Simmons, for *Age of Reason*, two years.
Crosby, " " two years.
1797—John Davies, for *Scripturian's Creed*, one year.
John Gratton, for *Christian Mysteries*, heavy fine.
Thomas Williams, three years' imprisonment.
1812—D. T. Eaton, prosecuted seven times, pillory inflicted, and £2,800 literature destroyed.
1813—George Houston, two years and fine £200.
1817—William Hone. His political parodies were prosecuted as blasphemous.
Shelley deprived of his children on account of his infidelity.
Richard Carlile, nine and a-half years and fines amounting to thousands of pounds.
Retchford, six months for report of Carlile's trial.
1818—James Williams, six months.
Joseph Russell, six months.
James Tucker, six months.
1819—John Cahuac, heavy fine for Palmer's *Principles of Nature*.
1820—Thomas Davison, two years.
Joseph Swann, four and a-half years.
Thomas Tyler, three months.
1821—Jane Carlile, two years for Sherwin's *Life of Paine*.
Mary Anne Carlile, two years.
1822—Mrs. Susan Wright, twenty and a-half months.
Samuel Waddington, one year for *Principles of Nature*.
Humphrey Boyle, twenty-three months.
Charles Trust, six months and £20 fine for *Principles of Nature*.
Joseph Rhodes, two years.
Joseph William Trust, two years.
William Holmes, two years.
John Barkley, six months.
William Rance, one year.
Charles Sanderson, one year.
Turner, one year.
Atkinson, one year.
1823—Robert Wedderburn, two years for blasphemous speech.
William Tunbridge, two years.
James Watson, one year for *Principles of Nature*, and several other prosecutions.
John Jones, six months for Carlile's *Letter to Wait*.
William Clark, four months for *Queen Mab*.
1824—William Campion, three years.
John Clarke, three years.
William Haley, three years.
T. R. Perry, three years.
Richard Hassell, two years.
T. Jefferies, eighteen months.
W. Cochrane, six months.
J. Christopher, six months.
M. J. O'Connor, six months.
James Affleck, three months for *Queen Mab*.
1827-31—Robert Taylor, three years for blasphemous discourses.
1840—John Cleave, four months for Haslam's *Letters to Clergy*.
Abel Heywood, committed for trial, but prosecution abandoned.
Henry Hetherington, several prosecutions.
1841—Moxon, the publisher, the last prosecution for *Queen Mab*.
1842—Charles Southwell, one year and £100 fine for *Oracle of Reason*.
G. J. Holyoake, six months.
George Adams, one month.
Mrs. Harriett Adams, one month.
1843—H. Robinson, twelve months.
James Finlay three months.
1844—Matilda Roalfe, two months.
1846—Thomas Paterson, fifteen months.
1857—Mrs. Emma Martin, six months.
Thomas Pooley, twenty-one months (five months only served owing to exertions of Buckle, Mill, etc.).
1878—Annie Besant, deprived of her child for publishing an atheistical work and associating with an infidel author (Bradlaugh).
1882—Henry Seymour, for blasphemous placard.
1883—G. W. Foote, one year for *Freethinker*.
W. J. Ramsey, nine months for *Freethinker*.
H. A. Kemp, three months for *Freethinker*.

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In addition to the foregoing, scores of the 750 prosecutions of the unstamped press were simply blasphemy trials. The authorities disguised the odiousness of their acts under cover of proceeding against unstamped papers or pamphlets. The list I have compiled does not include about thirty prosecutions directed against booksellers. Carlile's shopmen, for example, suffered very severely, twenty dividing amongst them forty years' imprisonment.

Our late leader had to win the seat which Northampton gave him in the face of the most bigoted and terrible opposition. The late Marquis of Queensberry had his seat in the House of Lords taken from him on account of his infidelity. Last, but not least, thousands of pounds bequeathed for Freethought purposes in the past have been diverted to other channels. But, happily, Mr. Foote has succeeded in stopping this robbery. MIMNERMUS.

Acid Drops.

LORD SALISBURY is probably not a reader of the *Freethinker*. We only say "probably" because it does not do to be too sure. Some persons do read this journal who would never be suspected of looking at it, even through a telescope. What *is* certain is that Lord Salisbury's speech to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was remarkably like our own article on "Breaking China." He observed that modern missionaries were not so fond of martyrdom as the ancient missionaries. They preach Christ with the guns behind them, and run back under cover when they are hard pressed. In the East they have a proverb, as Lord Salisbury reminded his hearers: "First the missionary, then the consul, then the general." Well, that is what we said, with a slight variation of language. Our statement was that the missionaries were advance agents of Commercialism and Imperialism.

The Bishop of Stepney let the cat right out of the bag. Preaching in St. Paul's Cathedral, he said that the Missionary Societies see to it that the trade of England and the flag of England are accompanied by the Banner of the Cross. Between the cynicism of Lord Salisbury and the asinism of the Bishop of Stepney the truth is coming to the daylight.

The *Daily News* hopes the missionaries will profit by Lord Salisbury's warning, and "temper their Christian enthusiasm with Christian prudence." But what is Christian prudence, and where is it to be found? We suppose it means Foreign Office prudence.

Apropos of Lord Salisbury's advice to missionaries, the *Topical Times* publishes the following satirical lines:—

Pack your bag and do not tarry,
Go and be a missionary,
Teach the heathen how to be
Circumspect, like you and me,
How to hide their shameful limbs,
How to warble Watts's hymns,
How to feel they're worthier far
Than their erring neighbors are!

Yet I warn you at the start. Ah!
Be a saint, but not a martyr;
Why should missionaries come
To a useless martyrdom?
If the natives won't admit you,
If they all look black and hit you,
Since that proves their country lacks hymns,
Wire for soldiers and some Maxims!

Maxims are things to teach them!
When our military reach them,
Though at first, perhaps, they'll hurt them,
In the end they will convert them
Into British subjects, then,
For the remnant of those men,
Here on earth has heaven begun,
So your mission will be done!

"Cyrano," in the same journal, observes: "The foreigner would have been quite comfortable in China, able to live and trade in perfect peace and amity, if only he had never meddled with the religion of the people. And, in the name of common sense, why should he? China has a civilisation older than our own; has a literature that is worthy of respect; has religious beliefs deeply implanted in the minds of the people, so that attacks are keenly resented. I should think a prompt kicking into the street the most courteous treatment possible for the man who should come as a guest into my house, only to tell me that I was a superstitious fool, and that his special belief was to be swallowed by me. No man, unless he was a hopeless cad or lunatic, would think of behaving like this as between man and man. Why, then, should it be thought either decent or praiseworthy as between nation and nation? Lord Salisbury, I think, underrated what I may style the religious side of the question."

The *Umpire* thinks that Lord Salisbury did well to point out that the people the missionary wants to convert "know full well that, though he freely gives them his tracts, it is only in exchange for their own tracts—of territory. Lord Salisbury further observed that the missionary does not go to the stake with the fervor that he used to. Quite so; there is more of the mart than the martyr about him nowadays. No wonder the natives jib when they learn that his mission is to be followed by their sub-mission!"

A word for "Brother Boxer" is put in by the Manchester *Sporting Chronicle*. Here is a noteworthy passage: "It is not as traders that the Boxer hates us and thirsts for our gore. It is because we have struck his deepest sensibilities and infuriated him on that question which is the most sacred to him—his religion. Because we persist in flooding his country with missionaries who tell him he is a heathen and a worshipper of graven images. It is religion again that is at the bottom of it all. Good old religion! A missionary with a box of fourpenny Testaments and a determination to show the benighted heathen the error of his ways is the greatest force in the world for producing hatred, bloodshed, and universal pandemonium."

While the missionaries are causing so much trouble in China, it is amusing to read that a Bible stall has been closed at Omdurman. Permission was granted for it early this year, but it has since been withdrawn. We also see that a mosque is being erected by the Government at Khartoum. Evidently it is not intended that the religious question shall be a source of disturbance in that locality. Lord Kitchener was wise in his generation when he refused to allow any religion in the Gordon College which he established out there at a cost of £100,000. His object—and a very statesman-like object too—was to provide a good and useful education for the better sort of young Arabs. The English men of God protested very loudly against that impious arrangement, but they found Lord Kitchener as easy to shift as the great wall of China.

A new poet has arrived. Shades of Milton, Tennyson, Browning, "lay low and say nuffin'." The new poet is the gifted Sheldon of *In His Steps* fame. Here are two verses by him which we take from the *Christian Age*:—

'Tis strange that what we think of most
We mention in our speech the least,
And Him of whom we ought to boast
We seat below us at the feast.

Though Christ, and Heaven, and Hell, and Death
Are most tremendous facts, we say,
We mention them with bated breath,
Except in sermons on Sunday!

The concluding lines of the second stanza are simply fine. They make you long, and long with an insatiable thirst, for more. Nothing so excruciatingly funny has found its way into print for many years past. There is no record of Jesus of Nazareth "dropping into poetry"; but if he ever did it in the style of the author of *In His Steps*, can we wonder that he was crucified?

Christian fighting Christian in the Transvaal was bound to eventuate in some personal surprises. We now learn that a Nottinghamshire Wesleyan fighting at the front recently came face to face with a Boer. Both levelled their rifles to shoot, but the Notts man shot first, killing his opponent. As the Boer fell, a New Testament dropped from his pocket. In it was a Methodist class-ticket, printed in Dutch. This ticket was sent to England, and was shown the other night to the members of the Wesley Quarterly Meeting.

"I should lose my faith in God," Kruger is reported to have said, "if I thought that the English were to remain masters of the Transvaal." Well, this only shows how religion lends itself to the personal point of view. Kruger did not feel like losing his faith in God when the natives were dispossessed of their land by the Boers.

Two recent novels bear the titles of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*. The books are not from the pen of the gifted editor of the *Methodist Times*.

According to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, in the *Sunday Reader*, the great John Wesley predicted that "money would be the ruin of Methodism." Meanwhile the reverend gentleman and his ministerial colleagues are raking in as much of the "ruin" as they can lay hands on, and their efforts are attended with a considerable amount of success.

Mr. Hughes has never known a Methodist lose his religion because he was a poor man, but he has known several rich men suffer that deprivation. This is rather rough on rich Methodists, and likely to alarm them—perhaps to alarm them out of the Methodist fold into one that is more accommodating. Mr. Hughes hastens, therefore, to say that "the richer Methodists were never so Christian as they are now." But what he probably means is that he never knew them in such a shelling-out disposition.

John Wesley's advice is heartily endorsed by Mr. Hughes,

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as it would doubtless be approved by most other men of God. "First: Get all you can honestly. Secondly: Receive all you can. Thirdly: Give all you can." We suspect that the third person is the most important member of this Trinity.

"A little more of the courageousness and plain-speaking of John Wesley," says Mr. Hughes, "and the manhood of the nation would not be so conspicuous by its absence at our places of worship." We note with pleasure this candid admission that men are scarce in churches and chapels, and we venture to think that they are not likely to be attracted there by an extra supply of collection boxes. What brings the preacher there is not so calculated to bring the congregation.

The Rev. Wickham Tozer, Chairman of the Ipswich Board of Guardians, is concerned at the fact that another member of that great Bumble authority "demeaned" himself by playing draughts and dominoes with the workhouse inmates. Good old Tozer spotted the member, and denounced him before the Board as having engaged in a pastime which was "derogatory to them, and not likely to do the workhouse inmates any good." He also doubted whether it was legal! Well, we have it on the authority of Bumble that the law is "a hass." We are perfectly sure that the Rev. Tozer is.

If you don't "Swelp me God" and kiss the book, you are liable in Germany to a fine of fifty marks and six weeks' imprisonment. That was the fate of a pious carpenter named Wollenberg, in the Mecklenburgh town of Rostock. He was called as a witness in a case, but declined to take the oath on the ground that Christ said "Swear not at all." It was pointed out to him that the Scriptures also ordained that everyone was to be subject to authority. He replied that obedience to men ceased when it entailed the breaking of one of God's commandments. Remaining obdurate, they fined him and clapped him in prison.

A story is going the round of the press of two shivering little urchins who listened one cold winter's night to a party of children singing the hymn, "There's a Friend for little children." Hearing this line, one of the urchins remarked to his companion: "We ain't seen 'im, 'ave we?" "No, we ain't," replied the other; but on hearing the next line, "Above the bright blue sky," he added: "That accounts for it, don't it?"

A certain Archbishop of York, who was an ardent fisherman, once betook himself for a few days to a little Yorkshire village which boasted a good trout-stream, and put up at a clean but modest hotel. His Grace, on his arrival, informed the landlord who he was, and on leaving wrote a cheque for his bill. The landlord closely scanned the signature. "What name is this?" he asked. "W. Ebor," answered his Grace. "Ah," said the landlord, as he pocketed the cheque, "I thought you were not telling me the truth when you said you were the Archbishop of York!"

One of the maniacs who think that people are to be converted by having Scriptural texts thrust under their noses recently scribbled up in a railway carriage on a southern line the words: "The wages of Sin is death!" Immediately afterwards some weary worker, stung, perhaps, by personal experience, wrote: "The wages on this line are a thousand times worse."

Mr. Janko Wesselinowitch recently published at Belgrade a humorous poem illustrating the loves of the ancient Greek gods. The police confiscated the paper, and accused him of "disloyalty to religion." In court the poem was read aloud, and, though none could deny the satire applied to Jove, Venus, and Mercury, the Public Prosecutor insisted upon the condemnation and punishment of the journalist. M. Wesselinowitch was therefore found guilty, but extenuating circumstances were admitted, the offended gods being only Greek deities, and he got off with five days' imprisonment.

At the Earl's Court Exhibition a member of the Mohammedan faith was put in charge of an Arab school in the Cairo section. Between intervals of teaching this good Mussulman had a keen eye for business, and was soon the centre of a brisk trade in "extracts from the Koran, sixpence each." Many visitors bought. Ladies put the pieces of paper in their purses, wondering if "there was anything in it"; whilst men pocketed the slips and laughed. They none of them could read Arabic. But the other day someone who could saw a "charm." He also laughed. The slim Oriental had written down some letters of the Arabic alphabet! Was it likely he was going to risk his immortal soul by selling the holy words to infidels for sixpence?

As it is usually the plodding fool that wins, so it is that the Sabbatarian crank, by sheer persistency, scores. What *are* the friends of a Rational Sunday thinking about? Some time ago we mentioned, amongst other inroads on reasonable liberty on the Lord's Day, the proposed action of the Town Council at Bournemouth in the way of restricting Sunday recreation at that seaside resort. The proposals—stupidly bigoted as they were—should have been nipped in the bud. But no effective opposition was offered at an early period, and now it is almost too late to do anything, for the local authorities have definitely decided upon making Sunday at Bournemouth really a *dies non*.

No more Sunday drives are to be permitted. That is to say, no more vehicles will be allowed to ply for hire. You've got to go to church or chapel or lounge about. If you want to get out of Bournemouth itself, and away from all its quite too-numerous church steeples, you will have to "hoof it." Unless, indeed, you happen to have a private carriage of your own, and then you may go whithersoever you please. That is a beautiful example of bye-laws for the rich and bye-laws for the poor. The very members of the Town Council who stop the rural rides of visitors on Sundays do not hesitate to avail themselves of "Sunday labor," which, by the way, is enforced in carrying them to church, chapel, and to many other destinations, which may mean pleasure and possibly business at the end.

The parson-ridden Town Council have now decided that, at the expiration of all existing omnibus, motor-car, and excursion coach licenses, no further licenses shall be issued except on condition that the vehicles shall not ply for hire on Sunday. In the meantime, a member of the Council named Gunning has given notice that he will move the revoking of the licenses of any who, prior to the expiry aforesaid, undertake to carry people out on Sunday drives. Obviously the only thing that is open now, especially for week-end visitors, is to transfer themselves in future to some other seaside place, and leave pious Bournemouth to itself, not only on the "Holy Sabbath," but on the Friday evening, the Saturday, and the Monday. If this will suit the weak, supine, inarticulate tradespeople, it will also suit those who might be visitors under less restrictive conditions, but who can find equally agreeable resorts elsewhere.

Bournemouth has its attractions, despite its stupid municipal authorities, but it is a place stifled with oppressive piety; its public walks are saturated with the spittle of consumptive people who are wheeled about in bath-chairs, and its cemetery is a place crammed with the prematurely dead—a melancholy spot which afforded Sir Walter Besant material for a most pathetic chapter in one of his novels.

Several of the retaliatory summonses taken out by Swansea tradespeople against members of the Corporation for Sunday labor were dismissed. "Treating hides," which was alleged against two employees of a magistrate, was declared to be a work of necessity. We cannot see the logic of the decisions. Where is the greater wickedness in going into a shop for a shave or for a newspaper, or a cigar or a packet of sweets or a little fruit, than in "dressing hides"?

A grey-haired cleric named William Richmond was charged at Great Yarmouth with indecent conduct on the beach. In an abject, whining address to the Bench, he begged to be let off. He was, he said, a clergyman of the Church of England well-known in Norwich and in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. If the Bench allowed the case to be published, the Bishop would take his license from him. The Bench let him off with a fine of twenty shillings.

A local preacher named Alexander Allison was co-respondent in an undefended divorce case from Stratford-on-Avon. Damages to the amount of £500 were assessed against him.

St. Louis seems to have a queer, mixed population. During the recent tramcar strikes women were stripped naked and beaten in the public streets. We are not astonished, therefore, to hear of a peculiar divorce suit in that city. Mrs. Lou Bates, a well-known "society" lady, wants to be divorced from her husband. Mr. Bates, in his answer, charges that his wife has misconducted herself with the ghost of Mr. William J. Florence, the celebrated actor, and is engaged to marry him when she dies. What a rumpus there would have been in the world if Joseph of Nazareth had preferred a similar charge against *his* wife! The joke is that we are told he had good cause for doing so. We suspect, however, that Mr. Bates of St. Louis will find great difficulty in getting an American jury to believe such a yarn—even a jury of Christians.

The most low varlets of the Most High are opposed to the Sunday Opening of Museums and Art Galleries, and yet do not object to the Grand Bonnet and Costume Shows, with music, singing, and recitations, in most of the churches.

Considerable amusement was caused the other night at an Art Club by the production of the following letter, addressed by a well-known painter of religious subjects to a lady of the ballet: "Dear Gussie,—I have been at my wits' ends to find a model for the lady in my 'Annunciation.' I have just

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thought of you. Do come. You would do splendidly.—Yours affectionately, etc."

The report that the great and only Talmage is in want of an advertising agent is groundless.

The London *Echo* has for years been in the habit of referring to "Tom" Paine. It never made the mistake of printing "Jack" Morley or "Bill" Harcourt.

The Duchesse D'Orleans, who died in the Protestant Evangelical Church, was not allowed to be buried in the family vault at Dreux. She was laid in a tomb apart, but a hole was made in the wall through which the hand of her marble effigy clasps that of her husband. What a lovely thing this religion is, to be sure!

The sun never sets upon the British Empire. "Yes," said a Yankee, "that's because God Almighty cannot trust Britishers in the dark."

In an article on "The Ebb of Crime" the *Guardian*, while regretting the "vague and indeterminate" character of the religious instruction given in elementary schools, gladly recognises that its general effect, together with that of "the moral teaching with which it is associated," is to diminish criminality. But is this really true? Is it not rather true that the youthful mind is occupied and stimulated by the scholastic part of the education, that this leads to more thinking, and that more thinking leads to less anti-social conduct? We attach no value whatever to the religious teaching, and very little to the so-called moral teaching.

The old Grand Duke of Oldenburg, whose death occurred recently, was not so sensitive as Emperor William about his "dignity." A few years ago a Social-Democratic workman was arrested on a charge of "insulting the Grand Duke," and condemned to six months' imprisonment. When the old Duke heard of it he issued this order, "Let the fellow loose at once! Nobody can insult me. If a donkey does not approve of Oldenburg, he can go and bray in some other land." The language is robustious, but the sentiment is all right. It is a great pity that Emperor William does not feel with the old Duke of Oldenburg that nobody can really insult him but himself.

Mdlle. Marie Nix, alias Gambert, a lady palmist, has been fined twenty shillings and costs at South Shields for fortune-telling. She denied that she had foretold future events, and said that she merely read her customers' characters from their hands. The bench, however, thought otherwise. These empirics often go a bit beyond their legal tether.

The English law declares that those who pretend to read the future are fraudulent impostors—that is, if they take money for their services. This constitutes the fraud, but the fraud presupposes an imposition. Every prophet is, therefore, an impostor. Yet the Bible was largely written by gentlemen of that persuasion.

It is proposed to send three London County Councillors to Canada and America to study the asylum system there. They would be accompanied by the assistant clerk of the Asylums Committee, the asylums engineer, and one of the medical superintendents. But why not a chaplain also? The lunatics ought to be represented.

The Ipswich Borough Asylum inmates are classified religiously. According to the local *Journal*, table No. 13 of the twenty-ninth annual report gives the following figures:—Church of England 65, Congregationalist 2, Baptist 3, Primitive Methodist 1, Free Ditto 1, Nonconformist 3. We suppose the three Nonconformists are too silly to say to what particular denomination they belong. That, however, is only by the way. What is important is (1) the overwhelming proportion of Church of England lunatics—a phenomenon which the parsons ought to explain; and (2) the utter absence of Freethinkers—which needs very little explanation. Gaols and lunatic asylums are patronised almost entirely by Christians.

We once heard an orthodox orator reciting the triumphs of his faith. "We build hospitals," he said, "we build almshouses, we build orphanages, we build asylums——" But before he could get any further an auditor remarked in a clear, freezing stage-whisper, "And you fill 'em." Convulsions of laughter, and the ruin of the catalogue.

Some time ago we drew attention to the fact that Tyson, the Australian multi-millionaire, was a Freethinker. We have now to note that Elsie Tyson, the poor Scotch lassie who finds herself the heiress of his four millions, professes no great love for the clergy. "I am told," she said to an interviewer, "that I ought to give money to ministers and missions and all that, but I don't believe much in them. The ministers have been so awfully attentive to me now, but when mother was sick they hardly noticed her, yet she was very religious."

The clergy are borrowing our thunder. We have asked "What has become of Hell?" and now the very same question is put in the very same words by the Rev. George Wolfe Shinn, D.D., in the *North American Review*. This gentleman's answer does not err on the side of definiteness. He appears to have dismissed the idea of a material hell of everlasting fire, but he sees it is necessary to keep some sort of a hell, and he therefore falls back upon the "awful fact" of "retribution." We suppose he thinks that is a fairly good working idea for the present. Of course it will get worn out (or seen through—perhaps *and* seen through) in time. But what does that matter? Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

"It is no concern of mine whether he considers himself an Agnostic or a Yahoo." This is what a Catholic priest, called Scott, says of Mr. Headley, a well-known Yarmouth Freethinker, in the local *Mercury*. We congratulate this man of God on his beautiful manners. His behavior is evidently on a par with his learning; for has he not referred to Professor Draper as an "obscure" writer?

Professor Huxley's family don't appear to be in any hurry. It is five years since he died, and his Biography, which has been definitely promised again and again, seems still as far off as ever. It is now promised "with certainty" before Christmas. We hope this will be the last time.

The Lord has not been kind to the Rev. Henry J. Dodwell. This unhappy man of God has been incarcerated as a Criminal Lunatic in Broadmoor Asylum ever since 1878, when he fired a pistol at the then Master of the Rolls, Sir George Jessel. Several efforts have been made to secure his release, but they have all failed in face of the doctors' certificates. It really seems that "Providence" ought to give this poor devil a little attention after twenty-two years of such melancholy confinement.

A contemporary tells a story of the Headmaster of a great public school who preached a sermon on a certain "anonymous donor," and said: "His name is known only to me, and to God, and to one or two others."

Death of Admiral Maxse.

FREDERICK AUGUSTUS MAXSE, who was born in 1833, died in London on Monday night (June 25). He was a man of great natural parts and lofty character. There was something almost Quixotic about him to men of more accommodating dispositions. He was an avowed Republican even in the face of Radical as well as Liberal cold-shouldering; he supported George Odger as a working-class leader when he was looked upon by society at large as a sort of Caliban; and most manfully, with voice and subscription, he stood up for Charles Bradlaugh when the "gentlemen of England" tried to break and kill him. Admiral Maxse always thought for himself and went his own way. Advanced as he was, he opposed woman suffrage; and in recent years he displeased a great many Radicals by his belief that England should stand well-armed and resolute before the world. He was not to be browbeaten. His courage was innate and invincible. He was as brave in advocating what he held to be the truth as he was in carrying dispatches "at imminent risk of his life" in the Crimea. Mr. George Meredith, his life-long friend, dedicated a book to him—a transcendent honor; and he is said to have suggested the fine sailor hero of *Beauchamp's Career*. But what will probably be of chief interest to the majority of my readers is that when I was struck down by the bigots in 1883, and most of the Liberal no less than the Tory papers were howling at me as a vulgar illiterate "blasphemer," the only public man outside the organised Freethought party who protested against this misrepresentation was Admiral Maxse. He said it was charitable to think that my detractors did not know me, and he asked them whether such a man as they depicted me could have made my speech to the jury before Lord Coleridge. I thanked Admiral Maxse for this service when he was living, and I thank him again now that he is dead. Such a man stands out from the crowd of timid mediocrities. He was one of nature's aristocrats. And that implies courage as well as brains. G. W. FOOTE.

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N.B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stonecutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

JOSEPH COLLINSON.—See paragraphs. We highly appreciate your strenuous work for the Humanitarian League.

J. G. CALDERWOOD.—We have addressed and posted your letter to Mr. Holyoake. He resides at Eastern Lodge, Brighton.

W. WRIGHT.—Thanks for the cutting.

C. K. DUMAS.—We do not think that Charles Bradlaugh's part of the "Freethinker's Text-Book" is now procurable unless second-hand. Thanks for the cutting. Such things are always welcome.

G. BRIGHTY, who heard Mr. Foote's lecture at the Athenæum Hall on Missionaries in China, feels inclined to rank him among the prophets, as he anticipated all that Lord Salisbury said on the same subject soon afterwards. "Allow me," this correspondent says, "to offer you my humble congratulations."

CHICAGO LIBERAL SOCIETY and DR. T. B. GREGORY.—We are obliged to you for the little circular. It would be pleasant to drop in at one of your meetings, but as that is impossible we send you our sympathy and good wishes.

HARRY RICHARDSON, 6 Eleanor-street, Campbell-road, Bow, E., will be glad to receive any parcels of old Freethought literature for distribution in East London. He undertakes that whatever is sent him shall be "well placed."

F. A. DAVIES.—We should be very sorry to judge an entire lecture by a single sentence. As a matter of fact, we knew nothing about the lecture itself, and were not even aware that you were the lecturer. Being apprised of the fact, we hasten to say, in common fairness, that we have heard good reports of your lectures from Mr. Roger and other members of the Camberwell Branch. But this does not alter our view of the wisdom and taste of the sentence that caused all the trouble. You forget the place and the occasion of your lecture when you refer to some strong expressions in Mr. Foote's *Royal Paupers*. The contents of that pamphlet were not delivered as a lecture on a Secular platform, and to a miscellaneous open-air audience at a time of great popular excitement. Mr. Foote wrote that pamphlet a good many years ago, as a private individual. No one else was implicated in what he said. Besides, you can often say in a book or pamphlet what it would be very indiscreet to say in public to a mixed assembly; and the very title of the pamphlet was a warning to every reader what to expect. There are passages in Shakespeare, for instance—to take an extreme illustration—which it would be absurd to expunge from his works; yet the man who ventured to quote them at a public meeting would deserve what he would probably get. Perhaps this will make the matter clear.

J. PARTRIDGE.—See paragraphs. Miss Vance has sent you one parcel of literature for free distribution, and another can be sent if required. We reciprocate your good wishes, and thank your Committee for their kind attention.

M. E. PEGG.—Pleased to hear that your start with the open-air work at Manchester was successful, and that fair audiences greeted the lecturer (Mr. Ward), in spite of the heavy downpour of rain.

W. COX.—We hope the outdoor experiment at Liverpool will be successful. It is work that needs some caution, as well as courage, in such a city.

A. R. FRENCH.—Glad to hear you are "delighted" with *Bible Romances*. The work has never been bound in a volume before, so that you must be one of the very first to read it in that form. The new edition of the *Bible Handbook* is nearly ready for publication.

T. WILMOT.—See "Sugar Plums." We hope to meet a big crowd of the Camberwell friends at the excursion, and we gather from your letter that the hope is likely to be realised.

G. DAWSON BAKER.—Received with thanks. Proof in due course. We are glad to hear that you are busy, though sorry that you have little leisure for Freethought writing. Yours is a pen that *should* be occupied.

J. E. HOSMER.—We have pleasure in penning a paragraph for "Sugar Plums" on your Liberal University, away in what used to be "the wild and woolly West," but is now the home of dauntless enterprise and high civilisation. You and your friends have our very best wishes for your success. Unfortunately, we cannot offer you anything more substantial. Those whose lives are devoted to working for Freethought have seldom more than suffices for the day's necessities, and not always that.

G. PORTER.—Too late for this number. Will try to find room in the next.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged to you for the cuttings.

RECEIVED.—Two Worlds—The Boston Investigator—The Sunday Reader—Truthseeker (New York)—Yarmouth Mercury—The Ipswich Journal.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

THIS is our last opportunity of calling attention to the N. S. S. Annual Excursion to Brighton, which takes place to-day (July 1). Particulars will be found in our advertisement columns, on the sixteenth page of this week's *Freethinker*. It will be noticed that the Special Train starts at a convenient time for persons in almost all parts of London; and, as the tickets are priced at a very low figure, there should be a large gathering of the "saints" on this occasion, especially if the weather happens to be favorable. Mr. Foote will join the Victoria contingent.

Provision will be made for the sale of tickets outside (please note *outside*) the four London stations in the advertisement—Victoria, Clapham Junction, London Bridge, and New Cross. This is for the sake of those who have not been able to secure their tickets beforehand. The ticket-sellers will be recognised by their wearing the old Bradlaugh-Northampton colors.

As the tickets for children under twelve are only 1s. 6d., Freethinking parents should take advantage of the opportunity to give some of their "offshoots" a day at Brighton.

A general wish has been expressed that the excursionists might all meet together (this is *not* a pun) at *one* meal. Accordingly an arrangement has been made for a General Tea at 5.30 in the large, handsome hall known to Brightonians as the Skating Rink, in connection with Mellison's Restaurant, in West-street, a few doors from the sea front. It was difficult to secure a suitable room, and a guarantee had to be given for 100; so a large number should foregather, and there is plenty of room for all comers. The tea will be 9d. per head, and more substantial food can be obtained if desired.

The London Branches of the N. S. S. are suspending their open-air propaganda to-day (July 1) in order that their members—including the often hard-working committees—may have nothing to keep them from joining the excursion to Brighton. Mr. Wilmot, secretary of the Camberwell Branch, says "everybody is going" in his district, so the Christian Evidence people will have it all their own way for once (God bless them!) in Brockwell Park. The Finsbury Branch also asks us to mention that there will be no lectures on Clerkenwell Green, and Miss Vance asks us to make the same announcement with regard to Finsbury Park.

Mr. Cohen had a good meeting at the Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on Sunday morning, but the projected evening meeting on the Town Moor was ruined by the rain, which started heavily at 5.30 and kept on all night. Mr. Cohen is at Newcastle again to-day (July 1), when special opportunity for discussion will be afforded to an opponent at the morning meeting. The evening meeting will be held on the Town Moor, near the Recreation Ground.

Mr. A. B. Moss was very busy on Sunday. In the morning he lectured at Station-road, Camberwell, and in the afternoon at Peckham Rye. Both audiences were large and appreciative. In the evening Mr. Moss went to Edmonton, but was unable to lecture in consequence of the rain.

We have received a communication from Mr. J. E. Hosmer, president of the Liberal University, Silverton, Oregon, which is in need of funds, as is very natural. Such an enterprise will necessarily take a lot of time, hard work, and perseverance to carry it to a successful issue. Its object is to provide university training on Liberal—that is, Freethought—lines, and especially to prepare Liberal propagandists for work in

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America. Of course "a day of prayer" is of no use in this case, but the Liberal University management has appointed July 20, 1900, as a Day of Donation. American Liberals are all requested to send a donation by that date, even if it is no more than twenty-five cents (one shilling); and the names and addresses of donors will be published in the *Torch of Reason*—a paper, by the way, which we are always pleased to see, but which reaches us rather irregularly. There may be some Freethinkers in England who would like to contribute something towards the establishment of this far-off institution, which is really deserving of the fullest possible support. For, after all, Freethought is like science and art—international; and the promotion of Freethought anywhere is the promotion of Freethought everywhere.

Mr. H. Percy Ward is doing "splendid work" in Birmingham, according to Mr. J. Partridge, who is a good authority on work. His open-air lectures in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings and Sunday mornings are giving a fillip to the movement. "We want more literature for free distribution," Mr. Partridge says. Well, we have instructed Miss Vance to send down a parcel; and perhaps there are others who could send some things they have no particular occasion for themselves. Mr. Partridge's address is, 65 Cato-street, Birmingham.

Mr. Ward has also started a Freethought Book Shop at 3 Rea-street, Digbeth, Birmingham, where he "invites the support of all reformers," and will, we hope, obtain it. Of course he will sell the *Freethinker* and all the books and pamphlets issued by the Freethought Publishing Company. He will also supply every other kind of "advanced" literature. This is a good move in the right direction, and we trust that Mr. Ward will be able to build up a fairly profitable business. What he wants to do, primarily, is to promote the circulation of Freethought literature; but at the same time he has got to live somehow, and if a man doesn't live by his work, what on earth *is* he to live on? We earnestly hope that this Freethought Book Shop will be a rattling success; and one way of making it so is for the Birmingham "saints" to drop in and spend as much as they can spare on papers and other publications for their own reading, or for lending to their friends and acquaintances.

The Birmingham Branch goes on picnic to-day (July 1), not to Jerusalem, but to Stratford-on-Avon—a far more important place, for it was there that the world's greatest genius was born and died. The Branch members will be glad to meet any outside friends who can make it convenient to turn up at the "Coach and Horses," Henley-street (Stratford). They sent a special invitation to "Mr. Foote and family," overlooking the fact (since noticed) that the London excursion to Brighton takes place on the same day. Mr. Foote can only wish them "a good time." We may add, for the sake of Birmingham friends who may not have seen the printed announcements, that the picnic is timed to start at 8.30 sharp, from outside the Victoria Hotel, John Bright-street; and to start on the return journey from Stratford at 6. The tickets are 5s. each, covering the journey and tea; the journey alone being 3s. 6d., and the tea 1s. 6d. There, now! That's all, isn't it?

The Liverpool Branch has closed its hall for the summer. Its annual picnic is fixed for Sunday, July 22. After that a start will be made with open-air propaganda. Mr. Stanley Jones, who is now residing again in Liverpool, will lecture outdoors for the Branch on four Sundays, from August 12 to September 2 inclusive.

The committee of the Humanitarian League have sent to Sir Matthew White Ridley a strongly-worded resolution, viewing with alarm the extension of flogging as proposed in the Youthful Offenders' Bill now before Parliament, and earnestly hoping that the Government "will not give any further countenance to a cruel and discredited form of punishment."

Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, in a letter to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, raises a useful point about birching. "A short time ago," he writes, "the *Westminster Gazette* gave a caricature of Lord Salisbury and the Archbishop of Canterbury congratulating each other on the advantages of having been flogged. There are many people who are no better than they ought to be who are always telling us of the advantages they derive from the cane or the birch. As they are not what they should be, it is clear their education by flogging is incomplete, and it would be the better for society if they were flogged again. Instead of a Bill to extend flogging to others, would it not be a good thing to flog those persons further who confess to its efficacy upon them when applied formerly? As these people are not so good as they might be, and they testify how they can be made better, the public would better see the value of the birch in the improvement it makes in them. Lord Salisbury says most Peers have been flogged, and, as many people wish they were ended or mended, their further flogging would be a public benefit. If there be salvation in flogging, its efficacy will appear when fairly applied to old offenders on their own confession—on an Archbishop and a Premier."

Mr. J. O. Bates, of the Vegetarian Stores, 42 Victoria-street, Gloucester, whose advertisement appears in this week's *Freethinker*, is a shareholder in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. He has now resolved to add this journal to the list of publications which he supplies to his customers, and has ordered nine copies weekly for a start. He says there will be "no returns," for what copies he does not sell he will keep for a week or two and then "give them away to make future subscribers with." We thank Mr. Bates for this effort to promote our circulation.

There is a striking essay in the June number of the *Fortnightly Review* on "The Evolution of Mystery." It is by the Belgian poet and dramatist, Maurice Maeterlinck, and translated admirably by Alfred Sutro. Here is a passage worth noting: "It is truth and sincerity that are called for to-day for the facing of all things—how much more when mystery confronts us! In the past, the prostration of man, his bending the knee, seemed beautiful because of what, in the past, was held to be true. We have acquired no fresh certitude, perhaps; but for us, none the less, the truth of the past has ceased to be true. We have not bridged the unknown; but still, though we know not what it is, we do partially know what it is not; and it is before this we should bow were the attitude of our fathers to be once more assumed by us. For although it has not, perhaps, been incontrovertibly proved that the unknown is neither vigilant, personal, sovereignly intelligent, nor sovereignly just, that it possesses neither the power nor the passions, intentions, virtues, and vices of man, it is still incomparably more probable that the unknown is entirely indifferent to all that appears of supreme importance in this life of ours. It is incomparably more probable that if, in the vast and eternal scheme of the unknown, a minute and ephemeral place be reserved for man, his actions, be he mightiest, best, or worst, will be as unimportant there as the movements of the obscurest geological cell in the history of ocean or continent. Though it may not have been irrefutably shown that the infinite and invisible are not for ever hovering round us, dealing out sorrow or joy as our intentions are evil or good, guiding our destiny step by step, and preparing, with the help of innumerable forces, the incomprehensible but eternal law that governs the accidents of our birth, our future, our death, and our life beyond the tomb, it is still incomparably more probable that the invisible and infinite, intervene as they may at every moment in our life, enter therein only as blind, indifferent, stupendous elements; and that, though they pass over us, in us, penetrate into our being, and inspire and mould our life, they are as careless of our individual existence as air, water, or light."

Maeterlinck is, however, no pessimist. "The hour," he says, "when a lofty conviction forsakes us should never be one of regret. If a belief we have clung to goes, or a spring snaps within us; if we at last dethrone the idea that so long has held sway, this is proof of vitality, progress, of our marching steadily onwards, and making good use of all that lies to our hand." His conclusion is that man's own life is the supreme concern to himself, and his sanity lies in making the most of it. Which is the philosophy of Secularism.

We are tempted to quote another passage from Maeterlinck's beautiful essay, the passage on the changed aspect of the mystery of death to the modern mind: "Does not each generation find the burden lighter to bear as the forms of death grow less violent and its posthumous terrors fade? It is the illness that goes before, the physical pain, of which we are to-day most afraid. But death is no more the hour of the wrathful, inscrutable judge; no longer the one and the terrible goal, the gulf of misery and eternal punishment. It is slowly becoming—indeed, in some cases, it has already become—the wished-for repose of a life that draws to its end. Its weight no longer oppresses each one of our actions; and, above all—for this is the most striking change—it has ceased to intrude itself into our morality. And is this morality of ours less lofty, less pure, less profound, because of the disinterestedness it has thus acquired? Has the loss of an overwhelming dread robbed mankind of a single precious, indispensable feeling? And must not life itself find gain in the importance wrested from death? Surely; for the neutral forces that we hold in reserve within us are waiting and ready; and every discouragement, sorrow, or fear that departs has its place quickly filled by a confidence, admiration, or hope."

A special article on the late Mr. Grant Allen, with reference to the Memoir just published by his intimate friend, Mr. Edward Clodd, will appear in next week's *Freethinker* over the editor's signature.

Readers of this journal are informed that they can still order copies of the Freethought Publishing Company's list of Cheap Remainder Books, which appeared recently in our advertisement columns. The list was removed to make room for other matter. It will be inserted again shortly.

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We venture once more to call attention to an item on our sixteenth page this week. We refer to the Application Form for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. Several friends have responded to our appeal, but we are anxious to hear from a considerable number of fresh applicants. In spite of the present being the holiday season, we are of opinion that a good many Freethinkers, who have as yet done nothing for this enterprise, should make up their minds on the matter and apply for at least *some* Shares forthwith, in order that the Board of Directors may be able to form comprehensive plans for the winter. It will be noticed that the Shares are payable in easy instalments.

Chemico-Physical Theories of Life.—IV.

As all energy in all bodies is simply a transference of force or motion, none is ever lost or dissipated, whatever may seem. Each energy in any substance dates its energy from some previous energy in some other substance.

Necessarily, then again all known forces are correlated, or interconvertible one with the other. Thus it is with magnetism, electricity, heat and light, admittedly. It is a justifiable speculation that life and mind are also correlative.

For if an atom be an automaton,* and its fundamental properties are indestructible, then the conclusion seems to follow, logically, that all energy, in all groups of atoms or bodies, at all times, is automatic. The philosophy of the new materialism removes the "if" from this proposition and puts it in positive form.

The recognition of the metallic and non-metallic elements as representative, in the chemical world, of an incipient sexuality of matter, is a grand advance in ideation, explanatory of much that was still obscure; and it is remarkable that there is only one element which seems to stand in the way of the universal application of the idea to the facts. That one is hydrogen, which, for the purpose of the theory, requires to be regarded as a metal. Whether it will ultimately be proven to be a metal or no time alone can tell; but even its exceptionability would not disprove the theory, but lead to its further evolution.

Though iron is the element which lends itself, in the highest degree, for the demonstration of electro-magnetic properties, all the others possess these, as I have written, in varying degree. It would have negatived evolution if it had been otherwise. It is a fact that the earth is a magnet. But it is not so by reason of its being all, or mostly, iron, though the distribution of that element throughout its mass is determinative of certain of the phenomena of terrestrial magnetism. So far as can be judged, the discriminating factor in all energy is magnetism. Just as a bar magnet attracts filings tenaciously at the poles, but weakly at the centre, so the earth attracts all bodies with greater intensity at the poles than at the Equator, thus demonstrating not alone the magnetism of the planet, but the magnetic subjection of all mundane bodies and constituents. Indeed, the reasoned conclusion from the facts is, "that every particle of every substance, and every atom of every element" in the earth, is equally with the earth itself, a magnet with poles and polarity.

To the legitimate question, Whence is obtained the magnetism? a twofold answer can be given—viz., from its constituent atoms and from its battery. The molten interior is undoubtedly a battery in which heat and vast energy are begotten by interchange and transformation; which energy finds expression on the surface by the magnetism of the poles, gravitation, and by volcanic and geyser action, burning and boiling oil and water springs, &c. But the stratified crust is likewise. A logical corollary of these facts is the induction that all the products of the earth, mineral, vegetal, and animal, are actuated by what we, in total ignorance of its essential nature, call magnetism; this being the basic universal energy.

It would be outside the scope of this disquisition to consider the primary and secondary laws which the facts indicate to be the lines upon which magnetism controls evolution; but it is necessary to bear in mind certain cardinal facts as having relation to the chemical and physical theory of life and mind.

In the firemist, with which we started, of course all bodies exist in the most rarefied state—viz, that of gas, which is as much as to say that the atoms are in a free state. It is a fact that all solids can be volatilised to the gas condition, just as all gases may be solidified. Hence whatever gases may evolve into, the germ of evolution may be traced back to the gases. Gases may be of one element only, or two or more of the same class, that is, either metallic or non, constituting a quasi-sexual combination. As we know, the atmosphere is a mixture of gases. Production virtually begins only when one or more of the elements unite to form a quasi-sexual combination, the result being different from any of the combining generators. Water, for instance, is the well-known offspring of just such a union of hydrogen and oxygen. And just here the homogeneousness of specific gases and liquids may be noted, indicating a definite structure, and, consequently, inviolable accuracy in these structural arrangements; and this again further indicates that all atomic properties are exerted with equal inviolability, in the least as in the greatest production: whilst the atoms and molecules, even of the densest solid, are ever in intense motion, order is everywhere maintained, and at all times, by the ever dominant polarity. But, and if, the gaseous atoms are the basis of all animal substance, is not their energy likewise the basis of all animal energy—in other words, their life? Such a conclusion seems justified, seems almost necessary. At least, if it is rejected, it appears incumbent upon the rejector to demonstrate where the new force he pleads for comes in, *and what it is.* Let him tell us exactly where, in the process of conversion, say of a molecule of oxygen, from the so-called non-living to the living condition, the new force finds entry, and whence it comes and whither it goes. We know, of course, that the rejector cannot do this, for the more he is brought face to face with the facts, the more is he compelled to discern that all force is inalienably thirled* to matter, and that its forms are the outcome of correlations.

Accepting the natural conclusion as intellectually necessary, then another inference seems equally incumbent—viz., that from the inviolability with which the molecules act, select, and arrange themselves, this molecular energy, inerrancy, must be the germ of all intelligence! The evolution of the crystal, the vegetal, and the animalcule, when traced, even in outline, exhibits how indefinitely the one shades into the other; and the same selectivity, discrimination, and polarity presides over the whole process. It must be borne in mind that all life is, in the ultimate analysis, simply motion. The processes of growth in the crystal, the quasi-animalcule, the vegetal, the animal, may differ; but the laws are the same for all. These are the laws of material energy, the fundamental basis of all life. And the proof of this resides in the fact that the "living thing," like the "dead thing," so called, is conditioned similarly; and not the living thing merely, but the "thinking thing" also.

A few degrees of temperature, for instance—even one or less in many instances—are adequate to determine whether a thing shall exist on what we call the "living" or the "dead" plane. Further, it is adequate to determine whether a thing shall live sooner or later, and whether an organ shall take on a particular function sooner or later. It should be quite superfluous to point out that if life was aught *sui generis*, aught imposed upon nature, or infused into nature, *the facts would be all the other way about.* The life power or process would supersede all other powers or processes; but it doesn't, it cannot.

Now we have seen, or at least it is implied in what

* In his "Graham" Lecture this year at the Philosophical Society, Glasgow, Sir W. Roberts-Austen, Master of the Mint, said "that diffusion was not confined to molten metals. Solid metals even would diffuse in each other. Gold, for instance, *placed in a tube at the base of a column of just melted lead*, three inches long, *would diffuse against gravity, and would appear in appreciable quantities at the top of the column in a single day.* Its diffusion at ordinary temperature was very slow, but it was nevertheless sure, and as the result of experiments made was comparatively as a thousand years to one day of melted lead temperature." And he gave a demonstration of microphotographic slides of steel (1·5 carbon) sections indicating *molecular unrest with every change of temperature.*

* Possibly English readers may not be familiar with this word. It means, tied without possibility of separation.

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precedes, that a lowering of temperature conditions the evolution of molecular aggregates, fluids, and solids from out the firemist; and we have in outline, and imperfectly no doubt, indicated the track of evolutionary integration therefrom. Temperature condition, then, is a cardinal one as respects matter and energy and the forms thereof.

It is then now pertinent to consider some physiological facts.

ROBERT PARK, M.D.

(To be concluded.)

Superstition in Germany.

CATHOLIC PRIESTS COUNTENANCE BELIEF IN GHOSTLY AND SATANIC VISITATIONS.

THE old superstition of a haunted house has been revived, not only once, but three times within about as many years, in Munich, creating great temporary excitement and causing a display of ignorance and credulity which is a disgrace to the progress of the age and the intellectual advantages of this acknowledged centre of learning and scientific achievement.

The first of these three instances occurred in 1897, when the inhabitants of the house, No. 20 Park-street, were disturbed at night by groans and sighs which could not be accounted for until a child saw the figure of an old woman dressed in black pass through the room, whereupon it was decided that the intruder was a demon in feminine disguise, and complaint was made to the priest of the parish, who came at once with his acolytes to drive out the evil spirit by means of prayers, holy water, and incense.

A DEMON EXORCISED.

The second instance took place in 1898, in another part of the town, where a mischievous couple, having quarrelled with an old woman living in the same house, avenged themselves by telling her that she had been chosen to be a sacrifice to the Devil, who would shortly come to claim her, in performance of a pledge given to him by a certain stock company formed in Berlin and having a branch in Munich, the object of which was to discover hidden treasures through diabolical assistance. The persons whom she had offended claimed to be stock-holders in that company, hence the readiness of Satan to punish their enemy.

The old woman was foolish enough to believe this absurd story, which was supplemented by appropriate sounds at night, whereby she was prevented from sleeping and frightened almost out of her senses. Finally she went to the priest and told the story, and he sent one of his assistants to exorcise the demon, after which the noises ceased, and the old woman recovered her peace of mind.

The third instance occurred very recently, in May, 1900 (to the shame of human enlightenment, be it spoken).

PANIC OVER A HAUNTED HOUSE.

The complainants were a family living in a modest apartment in one of the suburbs. The family consisted of a musician (a zither teacher), his wife, a young relative who served as maid-of-all-work, and a woman lodger, elsewhere employed during the day. The disturbances began during the night of May 7, and lasted nearly a week. The first intimation was a jarring sound, as though something had been thrown against a window which opened from the sitting-room into the otherwise dark chamber where the young girl slept. This noise was followed by rappings in various places, and by small pieces of coal thrown in different directions. The man was not at home when the mysterious commotion began, and when he came back and found the three women praying and telling their beads for fright, he only laughed; but later he, too, succumbed to the general panic. The news spread like wildfire throughout the neighborhood, and nothing else was talked about during the day, while every evening, from about seven o'clock till midnight, the street in front of the house was blocked by a crowd of men, women, and children eager to catch any crumb of information which might fall from the haunted second story, and envious of the few persons who had access to the suddenly notorious family. During the daytime the only token of the presence of the invisible guest was the frequent throwing of pieces of coal (in itself an inexplicable circumstance, as there was no coal kept in either room); but with darkness came a variety of noises, which continued till after midnight.

"ENLIGHTENED" POPULAR OPINION.

The general opinion of the waiting crowd was in favor of the theory that the Devil in person was to blame for the uproar. One man said that in these days of high prices for coal nobody but a devil would waste fuel by throwing it around; another told how Satan had appeared—all white, with a bare skull instead of a head; another said he was all black, with red, flaming eyes and green horns; whereupon another declared it could not have been the chief Devil, for his horns are red.

Only one of the crowd was enlightened enough to assert that there was no such thing as a devil, and when he was challenged to explain the mystery he said it was only some mischievous boys playing tricks, and if he had time and a good horsewhip he could soon drive the devil out of the scamp.

The family upstairs did not claim to have seen any ghost, and they settled into the belief that the intruder was the spirit of the wife's mother, who had recently died in the hospital without taking leave of her relatives, and had therefore come back to communicate with them in this fashion.

Nearly frightened out of their wits at this idea, they sent for a priest, who came in the evening and stayed till after midnight without discovering any cause for the manifestations, which did not occur while he was present.

The next day the case was submitted to the police, and an officer was sent, who spent the night in the apartment, but neither saw nor heard anything unusual.

THREE PRIESTS TO ONE GHOST.

Meantime the family, nearly worn out with lack of sleep, had obtained permission from the inhabitants of the next story of the house to put their beds into the garret, and expected to rest there in peace; but the noises and the flying lumps of coal followed them to this retreat, and also a curtain fell from the wall in close vicinity to their beds. The next night they returned to their own quarters, and another police officer was sent as watchman. Also three priests came early in the evening and remained until after ten o'clock, nine o'clock being the hour when the demonstrations had heretofore begun. But on this occasion all was quiet, and, although upon examination several pieces of coal were found upon the window-sill of the chamber, they were not thrown into the adjoining room. Even after the priests and the watchman went away, leaving the family praying and telling their beads, the only noise was a knocking which was heard three times before midnight. The hour for ghosts being supposed to be from twelve to one, there was no danger of disturbance after that time. One of the priests advised the family to have a mass said for the repose of the soul of the deceased relative, and to pray diligently themselves to the same end; also to address the supposed ghost and ask what it wanted. Accordingly the mass was ordered (such a service must always be paid for); the family prayed frequently over their beads, and the next time the knocks were heard the daughter of the deceased cried out: "Spirit of my mother, what do you want?" while the young girl added the usual formula:—

> All good spirits praise the Lord;
> Speak, and say what you desire.

But there was no reply.

This attempt to converse with a ghost was deprecated by the neighbors, as it was well known that such a liberty was likely to be followed by the sudden death of the interrogator.

ELUCIDATED BY A REPORTER.

At the end of the week a reporter of one of the principal city newspapers had an interview with the young girl, who had all along been suspected by several intelligent observers to be the cause of the mystification, and who, finally, after being promised that if she would tell the truth she should not be punished, made a full confession.

She had once noticed that her relative was extremely

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frightened at some accidental noise, and a desire arose to play upon that superstitious dread. Her first efforts were so successful that she kept on increasing and varying the method of attack. The pieces of coal were thrown as opportunity offered, and afterwards slyly laid by her upon the window-sill of her dimly-lighted chamber. The mysterious thumpings and knockings were produced by letting a heavy spool fall from the sewing-machine upon the platform near the window where the machine stood. As the platform was hollow, the spool in falling and rolling about made a peculiar noise, and as she directed the motion from a distance by tying the end of the thread around her finger the source of the disturbance was not discovered; also, as she herself showed great fear at these demonstrations, calling out "Jesus! Maria!" whenever a spool fell or a piece of coal flew, and praying and telling her beads as busily as the rest, her part in the business was not suspected by the family.

Of course, the excitement ended with her confession. The next gathering of the crowd was dispersed by the police, the girl was sent to her home in the country, and the enraged family demanded damages of her parents on account of the scandal, which had caused their landlord to notify them to leave his house.

THE MORAL.

The result of this incident may perhaps be to shake the superstitious credulity of many ignorant lookers-on; but what is to be said of the conduct of the better-informed in the matter? Not only did several priests appear to grant the possibility of ghostly possession, but a member of a Spiritualistic society visited the family and informed himself as to the minutest details of manifestations so absurd in themselves as to challenge investigation which must inevitably have led to discovery and exposure. It is the same old story everywhere, a lurking belief in the supernatural, which dominates most minds, and a desire on the part of more enlightened intellects to foster such a belief in the masses, in order to rule them by fear. Nor is it the Catholic Church alone that displays such ignorance and pursues such a policy.

Luther believed in the existence of the Devil, although he was ready to fight him. There are haunted houses in Protestant communities; Satan is burned in effigy by Salvationists in the public streets; believers and unbelievers run together to see and hear whatever peeps and mutters, and new sects are continually borrowing from old mysteries in every part of the world.

The only cure for such folly is a recognition of the fact that we know nothing except what is proved, and it will be a long time before the whole race has learned to accept and act upon that fundamental truth.

ELIZABETH E. EVANS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Asses.

THE ass has figured extensively in romance. His long ears and peculiar bray are explained by a story which goes back to the Flood. On that occasion, it is said, the male donkey was inadvertently left outside the ark, but, being a good swimmer, he nevertheless managed to preserve his life. After many desperate efforts he at last succeeded in calling out the patriarch's name, as nearly as the vocal organs of a jackass would allow. "No-ah, No-ah," cried the forlorn beast. Noah's attention was at last aroused, and, on looking out of window to see who was calling, he perceived the poor jackass almost spent and faintly battling with the waves. Quickly opening the window, he caught Neddy by the two ears and hauled him in. This he did with such vigor that Neddy's aural appendages were considerably elongated; and ever since donkeys have had long ears, and brayed "No-ah, No-ah" at the approach of wet weather. For the sake of Christians who are not well acquainted with God's Word, we add that this story is not in the Bible.

Classical scholars and students of modern literature know how the ass has been treated by poets and romancers. The stolid animal has generally been made the subject of comedy. Drunken and impotent Silenus, in the Pagan mythology, joins in the processions of Bacchus on a sober ass, and the patient animal staggers beneath the heavy burden of a fat-paunched tipsy god. Apuleius and Lucian transform the hero of their common story into an ass, and in that shape he encounters the most surprising experiences. Voltaire makes an ass play a wonderful part in his *Pucelle*. And in all these cases it is worth noticing how the profane wits remember the ass's relation to Priapian mysteries, from his fabled interruption of the garden-god's attempt on the nymph Lotis downwards, and assign to him marvellous amatory adventures. Erasmus, in his *Praise of Folly*, does not forget the ass, with whom he compares the majority of men for stupidity, obstinacy, and lubricity; nor is the noble animal forgotten by Rabelais, who cracks many a joke and points many a witticism at his expense.

Our own genial humorist, Charles Lamb, confesses, however, to a deep tenderness for Neddy, and dwells with delight on the protection which his thick hide affords against the cruel usage of man. Sterne, in his *Sentimental Journey*, has a chapter entitled "The Dead Ass," wherein the animal is lifted into the sphere of pathos; and, lastly, Coleridge has some very pious musings on an ass, wherein the animal is lifted into the sphere of religion.

Now, dear reader, you begin to see the drift of this long exordium, although my purpose was indeed twofold. First, I wished, after the example of my betters in literature, to give you a slight glimpse of the immense extent of my learning. Secondly, I wished to lead you through the various stages of literary treatment of the ass, from the comic to the pathetic, and finally to the religious, in order that you might approach in a proper frame of mind the consideration of Balaam's ass, who is the most remarkable of all the four-legged asses mentioned in the Bible. There were others. Asses were being sought by Saul, the son of Kish, when he found a kingdom of subjects instead. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass, and also apparently on a colt, having probably one leg over each. With the jawbone of an ass Samson slew a thousand Philistines; and if the rest of the animal accorded with that particular bone, he must have been a tough ass indeed. But all these are of little interest or importance beside the wonderful ass of the prophet Balaam, whose history is contained, with that of his master, in the twenty-second, twenty-third, and twenty-fourth chapters of the Book of Numbers.

—*From "Bible Romances" (Balaam's Ass)*, by G. W. FOOTE.

Correspondence.

ROBERT OWEN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Allow me to say that I am extremely glad of the tribute paid to my fellow-countryman, Robert Owen, in the *Freethinker*, and also of the present movement to honor this illustrious man. Oft I have stood by his neglected grave in my native soil, wondering how on earth sectarian Wales—the school of dogmatic theology and the hotbed of religious bigotry—produced such a genuine Secularist. A similar step was proposed by outsiders some years ago, but the Nonconformist conscience in Newtown was aroused, and the leading townsmen were petitioned, and warned not to recognise a "rank infidel." And even now, in view of the present movement, a Calvinistic preacher protested with all the energy of his holy soul against such unholy work. His words were, "Let his memory rot like his body in the old churchyard." The Welsh Press is priest-ridden, and monopolised by orthodoxy. Many a time have I been denied the paltry privilege of repelling the libellous attacks made upon scepticism and sceptics in its columns. This is especially true in the instance of that Welsh literary genius, Charles Ashton, who was an avowed Atheist and Materialist. No sooner were his eyes closed in death than he became the choice prey of orthodox harriers. Still there is hope, even for ultra-Puritan Wales. At least, in South Wales, the *Freethinker* and the N. S. S. have had a firm footing, and Secularism bids well for the future.

WILLIAM PUGH.

The Church and Truth.

THE Church has always—unconsciously perhaps—offered rewards for falsehood. It was founded upon the supernatural, the miraculous, and it welcomed all statements calculated to support the foundation. It rewarded the traveller who found evidences of the miraculous, who had seen the pillar of salt into which the wife of Lot had been changed, and the tracks of Pharaoh's chariots on the sands of the Red Sea. It heaped honors on the historian who filled his pages with the absurd and the impossible. It had geologists and astronomers of its own, who constructed the earth and the constellations in accordance with the Bible. With sword and flame it destroyed the brave and thoughtful men who told the truth. It was the enemy of investigation and reason. Faith and fiction were in partnership. To-day the intelligence of the world denies the miraculous. Ignorance is the soil of the supernatural. The foundation of Christianity has crumbled, has disappeared, and the entire fabric must fall. The natural is true. The miraculous is false.—*Ingersoll.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: No lecture—N. S. S. Excursion.
FINSBURY PARK: No lecture—N. S. S. Excursion.
MILE END WASTE: No lecture—N. S. S. Excursion. July 4, at 8.15, R. P. Edwards.
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, S. E. Easton, "Some Real Saviors of the World."
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies. Lectures every Tuesday and Thursday at 8 p.m.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): Closed during the months of June, July, and August.
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH.—Annual Pic-nic to Coach and Horses, Stratford-on-Avon. Start at 8.30 from outside Victoria Hotel, John Bright-street. Tea at 4; return at 6.
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE; C. Cohen—11, at Sandhill, Quayside; 7, Moor Edge, near Recreation Ground.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): R. Law, F.G.S.—3, "How the Rocks which Contain Coal were Formed"; 7, "Cave-hunting." Tea at 5. Particulars will also be given of members' and friends' excursion on July 8.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—July 1, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—July 1, N. S. S. Excursion. 15, m., Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park. 22, Northampton.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—July 1, Birmingham. 15, Northampton. 22, Birmingham. August 19, Northampton.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—July 1, m., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 8, e., Hammersmith. 15, m., Battersea; e., Stratford. 29, m., Station-road; a., Peckham Rye.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 27. SUNDAY, JULY 8, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

Grant Allen.

Grant Allen: A Memoir. By EDWARD CLODD. With a Bibliography. (London: Grant Richards.)

MR. EDWARD CLODD has fulfilled a pious duty in writing this Memoir of his friend, the late Mr. Grant Allen. And he has done his work excellently. He has said all that is necessary in these couple of hundred pages of liberal and well-margined type. For the subject of this volume is really not one of the immortals, although he was possessed of many fine and admirable qualities—qualities of intelligence that made him interesting and stimulating to a large class of readers, and qualities of character that endeared him (apparently) to a large circle of friends. We may add, in passing, that the volume includes a beautiful portrait of Grant Allen, and specimens of his minute handwriting. The motto chosen for the whole Memoir is from Landor—which should have been stated; but as Landor meant it for himself we doubt the propriety of using it for another. We need not say more; yet more could easily be said in such a case.

We learn from this Memoir that Grant Allen was Irish on the father's side, and Scotch, with admixture of French, on the mother's side. We are told that he was as near as possible a pure-blooded Celt. Whereupon we are treated to a little of the fashionable talk about the peculiarities of the Celtic genius. It reads very prettily in print, but it is probably all stuff and nonsense, and none the less so because it appears to have been devoutly believed in by Grant Allen himself. His father was a Church clergyman, who revolted against the Athanasian creed, and finally resigned his incumbency. Allen was born at Alwington, near Kingston, Canada, on February 24, 1848. He was educated there at first under a tutor, afterwards in France, then at Birmingham, and lastly at Oxford; matriculating at Merton College in 1867. While at Oxford he became a Herbert-Spencerite, if the expression is allowable. "Having," Mr. Clodd writes, "from his earliest boyhood dismissed, if he ever held it, all belief in the supernatural, his was no sudden conversion, but the orderly development of a mind attuned to the new evangel." His first marriage was brief and unfortunate; his wife was stricken with paralysis, and died after two years of helplessness. His second marriage seems to have been fortunate in every way. As a writer on scientific subjects, he gained the esteem of good judges, and even of the best—such as Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley. This kind of writing, however, did not bring him a subsistence; so he turned to fiction, produced a number of readable novels, gained the *Tit-Bits* prize of £1,000, and managed to rub along in comparative comfort until his death, which occurred on October 25, 1899, after weeks of frightful agony. For the rest, it may be said that he was not a man of action, but "a literary gent," that his life was not eventful in the sense that others can appreciate, and that the real interest of this volume is rather intellectual than personal. Yet it would be unfair, as well as impolitic, to pass over in silence the testimony of a friend like Professor F. York Powell, who knew him for thirty years. "There was perpetual interest," this friend says, "in his talk and life. But if he had been blind and unlettered I should have loved him and respected him, for he was ever a close follower of Truth, and walked in noble companionship with Pity and Courage."

With regard to Grant Allen's scientific writings, it is difficult for an ordinary reviewer to say anything useful. Mr. Clodd thinks he might have made a very considerable name in this direction if the conditions had been more propitious. But this is scarcely a profitable theme of speculation. There may be—though we doubt it—many mute, inglorious Miltons buried in country churchyards; but the accomplished fact is the only thing that counts, and the only basis for the world's judgment. It seems to us that Grant Allen was rather acute and active than original. His versatility is praised by his friends, including his biographer; but versatility means ineffectiveness except in the case of consummate genius. The late Mr. Gladstone was a versatile man; he wrote on many subjects, and his great name gained him a hearing; but nothing that he wrote, outside the sphere of practical politics, was really worth the attention of those who were conversant with his subjects.

It was as a novelist, according to Mr. Lang, that Grant Allen found his true line of work. We suspect, however, that this judgment is due to the fact that Mr. Lang was no judge of his friend's scientific work, and dissented from his social, political, and religious opinions; so that the novels were the only things he could unreservedly appreciate. Grant Allen was not a born novelist. He wrote fiction merely to earn money. He says himself that he stooped deliberately to catch a lower (and profitable) public taste. Most of his work in this line was pot-boiling. It was not dishonorable, but it was not literature. Towards the end, by a sort of reaction, he began to take himself seriously as a novelist—and he overdid it. He wrote certain "Hilltop" novels, which he invited the public to regard as serious expressions of his convictions. But that was not art. It was preaching. *The Woman Who Did*, for instance, is a poor melodramatic story, with nothing of any value in the way of characterisation. It was written for didactic purposes. "This is my Evangel," he wrote in a presentation copy of the book to Mr. Clodd. So it might have been. But great novels are not written in that way. When the didactic purpose becomes predominant it is the death of art. Art may have friendships, but no alliances. Such close unions are like the connection of France with Russia; the former supplying all the rhetoric, and the latter reaping all the advantage; with the further result that the more ethereal partner is dragged down to the level of the more ponderous one.

Grant Allen had great trouble in getting his "Evangel" published. "The publishers," Mr. Clodd said, "would have none of it." The author threatened to destroy his manuscript. His old friend Nicholson "offered to take it into the immortal custody of the Bodleian." But this "flattering suggestion" was declined. A middle course was to be adopted. "I'll keep the MS.," Allen said, "during my lifetime, and ask my wife to pass it on to you after my departure from a planet which I shall have scanty cause to remember with gratitude." Considering the character of the book, the case was really developing into comedy. But at last Mr. John Lane agreed to publish the thing. It had a good sale, though not a great one; and it affected for the worse the sale of Allen's other novels afterwards. Mr. Stead published a summary of it in the *Review of Reviews*, believing that "the book was its own best antidote." But the monopolists of the bookstalls in Ireland—as was no doubt natural in such a Catholic country—refused to sell the magazine, and declined "to be made the vehicle for the distribution of attacks upon the most fundamental institution of the

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Christian State." They need not, however, have been alarmed. Mr. Stead was right; the book is its own best antidote. The story itself—as far as a story can—refutes the author's thesis. Nothing but mischief and suffering to everybody concerned comes of the heroine's attempt to live a life of "free love" by discarding the obligation of legal marriage. And by a curious irony, which Allen evidently did not perceive, the partial peace and happiness which comes at the end is due to the unsophisticated heart of the young "Philistine" lover of the heroine's daughter. Instead of throwing her over when he learns the secret of her birth, he acts like a sound, honest lad who is really in love and means "to marry the girl" on that very account—which is the best of all accounts. He sends her a telegram, refusing her proffered release, and holding her to her engagement. Excellent young "Philistine"! There is much to be said against his species, but there is often a certain racial soundness in it. He is not necessarily without a clear eye for justice and generosity, and he has sometimes to retrieve the consequences of the perversity which (as Goethe noted) is apt to develop in cleverer people.

Mr. Clodd's comments on this matter are judicious. He does not like to give his friend away; but he is bound to admit that Allen showed in this instance the Celt's disposition to "react against the despotism of fact," and that "his enthusiasm obscured the enormous complexity of the problem." Mr. Clodd observes that "Christianity has much to answer for" in regard to the sexual evils of modern society. It has treated the sexual as opposed to the moral, and the result is "pruriency and nameless vices." But, after all, marriage is not a distinctively Christian institution. Christianity adopted it from Pagan society, and made it "sacred" in the religious sense of the word, thus placing it beyond the influence of the spirit of reform. What we have to do in the immediate future, as Mr. Clodd sees and indicates, is to rationalise marriage—not to destroy it.

G. W. Foote.

(To be concluded.)

Aggressive Christianity.

I wish in no way to question the right of persons to believe in the Christian or any other religion, if they consider that they have sufficient evidence to justify them in so doing. Neither do I object to theological propagandism being carried on in a proper and judicious manner. On the contrary, in my opinion all questions should be submitted, when desired, to full and fair discussion. I am a thorough believer in debate, and I also adhere to the broad and sound Secular principle, that no persecution nor social ostracism should be inflicted for holding and avowing honest and sincere opinions. We cannot all think alike; therefore, while I claim freedom of thought for myself, I readily grant the same to those who differ from me. Nothing tends more to limit individual and general progress than the attempt to prevent freedom of opinion. "During," says Buckle, "almost a hundred and fifty years Europe was afflicted by religious wars, religious massacres, and religious persecutions; not one of which would have arisen if the great truth had been recognised that the State had no concern with the opinions of men, and no right to interfere, even in the slightest degree, with the form of worship which they may choose to adopt." It is this continual interference with the opinions held, and the form of worship adopted by others, that has made Christianity thoroughly aggressive.

The aggressive spirit of Christianity has always been stimulated by fanaticism, which is perverted emotion and excessive enthusiasm. Under its sway reason and judgment are deprived of their normal power, and visions are substituted for realities. Fanaticism is an evil which should be avoided, but more particularly upon religious questions, the tendency of which is to excite the worst of human passions and to cause the most unjustifiable outrages upon the feelings of those who have the courage to think and speak contrary to the dictum of the prevailing theology. History is full of records which prove the truth of this allegation. But ample evidence is afforded of its accuracy in the conflict now going on in China. Undoubtedly, Christian aggression is at the bottom of the unfortunate dispute in the East. Here we have another instance of missionaries doing their best or worst to verify Christ's words, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Lord Salisbury, in his recent speech at Exeter Hall, pointed out the necessity of missionaries being more prudent and just to other religionists. He mentioned the fact that some nations had got the idea that missionary work was the mere instrument of the secular government, whose objects it aimed to achieve. This view is held by the Chinese, and the recent massacres of Christians in that country were no doubt due to it. The *Daily Chronicle* of June 20, referring to this speech, puts the case thus:—

> "We touched yesterday upon the missionary question, which is so intimately concerned with the movements of popular opinion in China.....There was a time when the evangelist took his life in his hand, and suffered martyrdom for his faith, without invoking any secular authority either to aid or to avenge him. But now a foreign mission that incurs hostility looks to its Government to send a gunboat, and the regular appearance of the gunboat inspires the belief in that quarter of the world that the missionaries are the agents of foreign aggression.....Speaking of Mohammedanism, Lord Salisbury said: 'You are dealing with a force which a pure, though mistaken, theism gives to a vast population. You will not convert them.....I think that your chances of conversion, as proved by our experience, are infinitely small compared to the danger of creating great perils and of producing serious convulsions, and, it may be, of causing bloodshed which will be a serious and permanent obstacle to that Christian religion which we desire above all things to preach.' It would be difficult to overrate the gravity of these words. They mean that to the mind of a statesman, and in this case a statesman whose religious feeling is very deep, the possible success of missions in the East is outweighed by the danger to peace and to the character of Christianity itself. That is a proposition which the missionary societies must ponder seriously."

If it were not for the deplorable consequences of this missionary enterprise, the conduct of Christians in the matter would be exceedingly amusing. With an unpardonable audacity, they assume the right of conquest, and hug to themselves the delusion that theirs is the only true religion, which, on account of its superiority, is destined to triumph over all other religions. Were ever such conceit and impertinence surpassed? It was through acting upon this fanatical notion that so many of the cruel wars which have devastated the world were caused. But why should professed Christians intrude themselves upon believers in other religions, and speak of their faiths in offensive terms? No doubt there is much in those religions that is false and absurd. But cannot the same be said of the teachings of the Christian Churches? Undoubtedly it can, and with the strictest accuracy. And, be it remembered, Freethinkers have been ostracised, fined, and imprisoned in this country for saying so. Now, however, when these pious orthodox believers are being paid back in their own coin, they call for the aid of the secular government. Well may Lord Salisbury remind us of the proverb they have in the East: "First the missionary, then the consul, then the general." It would be far better if the followers of the "Prince of Peace" would act upon the advice: "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." At the meeting of the British Association held in Ipswich, in 1895, Dr. R. N. Cust, LL.D., F.R.G.S., rebuked Christian aggression thus:—

> "If foreigners were to introduce themselves into England, and Arab Mohammedans were to get possession of a plot of ground close to Westminster Abbey, erect a conspicuous mosque with minarets, and call to prayer in loud tones, I doubt whether the populace of London would bear it; they would at first treat it contemptuously as a nuisance, and the police would deal with it in the category of dustmen's, fruitsellers', and milkmen's cries, or a street band of nigger singers and music; but patience has its limits. And what can be said of Englishmen who presumably enter China on a Christian mission, erecting on a sacred hill in Fuchau a lofty building, which overhung the place of Chinese worship? If the Chinese from time to time rise up against the 'Foreign Devils,' and take their revenge in an atrocious manner, this is the real cause; they do not want the presence of overbearing and unsympathetic foreigners in their midst."

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There cannot possibly be any justification for the aggressive missionary work which has been going on in China since the Treaty of Pekin was signed in 1860. From that time Christians there have not only assailed a religion much older and more extensively believed in than their own, but they have done so in a most offensive and impertinent manner. If it is urged that Christianity is the better religion, and, therefore, should supplant all others, the answer is that such an assertion is as false as it is egotistical. Even Lord Salisbury admits that the Mohammedans have a "pure theism," which cannot be said truthfully of Christians. And the Rev. Canon Taylor writes thus of the influence of the religion of a people designated by Christians as "heathen":—

> "When Mohammedanism is embraced by a negro tribe Paganism, devil-worship, fetishism, cannibalism, human sacrifice, infanticide, witchcraft, at once disappear. The natives begin to dress, filth is replaced by cleanliness, and they acquire personal dignity and self-respect. Hospitality becomes a religious duty, drunkenness becomes rare, gambling is forbidden, immodest dances and the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes cease, female chastity is regarded as a virtue, industry replaces idleness, license gives place to law, order and sobriety prevail; blood feuds, cruelty to animals and to slaves, are forbidden. A feeling of humanity, benevolence, and brotherhood is inculcated. Polygamy and slavery are regulated, and their evils are restrained."

Contrast this with Canon Farrar's indictment of Christian missions. He says in the *Crescent*:—

> "Sir Henry Layard, an entirely impartial observer, said of the town of Shuster, an Eastern town of thirteen thousand inhabitants, in Persia, that the inhabitants were clean, happy, and prosperous; and then he adds this frightful sentence: '*Why? Because there were no Christians!*' Terrible witness! And what did it mean? There are no Christians, and therefore no grog-shops, and therefore the people are happy, prosperous, and contented! Alas! not content with destroying our own land and our own people, we Englishmen have carried with us wherever we have gone this corroding curse of drink. To quote the late Archbishop of York, 'We have girdled the globe with a zone of drunkenness; we have laid a stumbling-block before the helpless childhood of the world.' England has not only stained, she has polluted with drink and honeycombed with foul disease, the lives of those races who will survive their contact with her. How can we avoid the guilt of this terrible national indictment?"

It is not denied that some good might have occasionally followed the labors of a few of the missionaries; but, where this has happened, it has been through the application of secular agencies, and not in consequence of adopting Christian teachings. The orthodox author of *Conquests of the Cross* is candid enough to admit this. He says: "Secular enterprise has built the great Christian cities of the Western Hemisphere. The California of to-day could not have been created by missionary effort alone." Personally, I regard foreign missions as a combination of fanaticism, fraud, impertinence, and folly. Their history is a record of failure, and also of provocation of hatred and wars, which have retarded personal liberty and paralysed national progress. Instead of sending men where they are not wanted, and where they are instruments of mischief, let attention be given to requirements nearer home, where, in too many instances, civilisation is sadly needed.

CHARLES WATTS.

Are We Still Christian?

NEARLY thirty years have elapsed since Strauss asked the question I have placed at the head of this article. The query was direct, and the querist sought in asking it to bring the Christian world to a reconsideration of its fundamental doctrines in the light of existing knowledge. But that is what the religious world never has done, and never will do. The usual restatement of religious beliefs, so that they may not conflict with modern knowledge, is not a candid examination of their real present value, but an endeavor to see how much of the old can be retained *in spite* of modern developments, or an attempt to twist modern teaching so as to harmonise with ancient records and decaying creeds. It is in this way that the doctrine of evolution is made to harmonise with Genesis, the Biblical account of the origin of languages with the scientific belief of the common origin of most of the European tongues, and, in sociology, the teachings of Marx and Lassalle extracted from the nebulous sayings attributed to Jesus Christ. The question is never, "What evidence is there for the old beliefs?" but always, "How much of the old belief am I compelled to relinquish?"

One way of answering the question might have been by putting a counter query: "Have we ever been Christian?"—Christian, that is, in the sense of carrying out the plain teachings of the Christian religion to their logical conclusion. Certainly no nation has ever been Christian in that sense. Individuals here and there may have come nearer the mark, but in the mass the common sense of mankind has asserted itself by putting the necessary qualifications or modifications on Christian teaching that would admit of their possessing at least a show of reason. We hear much of the corruption of primitive Christian teaching, but the truth is that it was only as it became corrupted that it became decently practicable. Such a precept as "Give to him that asketh" demanded the qualifying clause—if he is deserving of the gift; that enjoining the believer to "Resist not evil"—do not encourage the spirit of revenge. In every case the extravagances of Christian teaching had to be toned down before there was even a decent pretence that it was applicable to ordinary human affairs.

And even then the interpretations placed by the bulk of the body of believers varied to such an extent that, in talking of Christian beliefs, it is necessary to specify the century, almost the generation, in order to have a clear conception of what set of beliefs we are referring to. There is no definite set of beliefs that can be said to have been accepted by all Christians at all times and under all conditions. The nature of inspiration, of revelation, of the nature and relation of the three persons of the Trinity, of Providence, have all varied from age to age, one generation adopting what another has rejected, or taking as an article of faith what had previously been denounced as the greatest of heresies.

In the essay I have named Strauss answered his own question by showing in a series of chapters that the standpoint from which we moderns contemplate nature has so completely altered from that of our ancestors that Christian beliefs no longer possess any force. To them the earth was the centre of the universe, the scene of God's direct operations; man was literally the lord of creation, with all nature constructed with a view to his welfare and happiness. With us, on the contrary, the earth has been deposed from its commanding position, and ranks only as a mere speck in a universe of worlds; man, while the most complex form of animal life known to us, is yet but a term in the long series of animal forms, to the continuance or happiness of which nature is as supremely indifferent as it is to the preservation or happiness of a worm struggling in the jaws of a bird. The cosmology upon which Christianity rested, and from which it was a logical conclusion, has been completely destroyed; it no longer exists even in the minds of the most illiterate, and with its decay the doctrines of Christianity are left without even a gloss of reason to hide their barbaric character.

The inevitable result of these changes, as Strauss pointed out, has been that Christian beliefs can no longer stand as matters of intellectual conviction. They do exist as inherited doctrines, and persist for a number of more or less sinister reasons—the belief of the well-to-do that they keep the "lower classes" in order, and thus serve to keep down the police rates; of the poor that it provides them with charitable relief, which, for the most part, they would be better without; of the professionally interested because they serve as a source of income. They exist thanks to the indolence of one class, the fears of another, and the cupidity of a third; but a search for Christian doctrines as matters of sound intellectual conviction is fast assuming the shape of a search for the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life.

What educated man or woman is there to-day who can honestly believe in the power of prayer, in miracles, in inspiration, in special providence, or in any of the specifically Christian doctrines? All these beliefs may still be professed, but is there any sincerity at the back

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of the profession? Why is it that Christians denounce as impostures all stories of miracles and the like, except such as are contained in their own sacred books, and, when one of their contemporaries professes to have received a message direct from God Almighty, join with the most pronounced Atheist in looking upon such an assertion as a proof of dementia? Only that there is no conviction beneath the assertion of belief. There is a Wesleyan Methodist fire and life assurance society. This by itself is a practical negation of the belief in Providence, and a religious body in the States recently denounced such societies as Atheistic in character. But suppose this association were offered the chance of insuring two buildings—an Atheistic lecture hall with a lightning conductor, and a church without; does anyone doubt which building would have to pay the larger premium? When it comes to hard matters of fact the Christian acts pretty much as does the Atheist. He takes all the precautions that science advises or common sense suggests, and if he does place his trust in providence it is only because his resources elsewhere have failed.

No man can see God in the workings of the world as our ancestors saw him. Science has so successfully explained in terms of mechanical forces one set of phenomena after another, criticism has so riddled the various conceptions of Deity that have been propounded from time to time, that the portion of the Athanasian Creed affirming that God is incomprehensible is being generally accepted, only there is the additional conviction that it is hardly worth while troubling one's head concerning an established incomprehensibility. Christians themselves, filled with the desire to commit suicide to save themselves being slaughtered, explain at length that nature expresses invariable laws, that there is no alteration in the mechanical sequence of events either discoverable or thinkable; only they add that behind these processes there is a Deity as the creator and sustainer of all. But it was neither God the creator, nor God the sustainer of invariable processes, that roused the fears and secured the worship of people. They worshipped God not as the creator of the univere, but as the constant manipulator of it in the interests of mankind. A God that *created* the world, and ever afterwards "sat up aloft seeing it go," could no more command the worship of people than a parliament that was twelve months in recess each year could successfully appeal for their votes. A mere abstraction such as Deity has become in the hands of most advanced apologists may live for a while in virtue of the inherited feelings or instinct to which it appeals, but its final disappearance is a mere question of time.

The distance we have drifted from our ancient moorings may be seen plainly enough by one or two further considerations. Nothing is more commonly met with in religious circles and in religious journals than the statement that Parliament is not the place in which religion should be discussed, nor is the pulpit the place to decide political issues. One could appreciate such a declaration if it were made by Atheists only, but to find it stated by Christians is, to say the least of it, surprising. Christians of earlier generations knew of no such division, nor does the greatest Church of all, the Roman Church, admit any such division to-day. To them the Church was part and parcel of the State, and if Christianity be all that its confessions of faith declare it to be, their position was the only logical one. If Christianity be a body of doctrines resting upon evidence that can command the assent of all who impartially examine them, if the current claim be true that the highest form of social life is inseparable from belief in these doctrines, that even family life and individual character are endangered by their absence, then every argument that will hold good for the State taking charge of the education of the people, regulating certain aspects of family life, and doing what it can to raise the character of its subjects, will also hold for the State to act as an instructor in matters of religion. Upon these assumptions the State has as much right to insist that a parent shall instruct his children in religion as it has to insist upon his taking charge of their education or supplying it with proper food and shelter. It is conceivable that Christians might be so far in a minority as not to be able to induce the State to act in this manner; but that Christians themselves should assist the movement for divesting the State of all influence in matters of religion is an admission that they have ceased to believe in the supreme value of their own dogmas, and have come to regard religious beliefs as a kind of speculative luxury that no one gains by in the possession or loses by in the rejection.

The plain fact is that the vast majority of the civilised world have already outgrown Christian beliefs. They may, many of them, still accept these in name, but they attach to them a meaning completely at variance with their historical significance. The whole spirit of Christianity is alien to the methods of modern thought and antagonistic to its results. It dismisses its God as a myth, its science as a fairy-tale, its description of an after-world as hysterical and useless. With the doctrine of eternal damnation denounced from hundreds of pulpits as an outrage on the character of God; with the fall of man dismissed as a fable, and by implication the necessity of the atonement abolished; with the various doctrines of Christianity affiliated to similar teachings of half-savage religions; with the Bible reduced from its historic character as a God-given revelation to that of a mere collection of anonymous pamphlets without a shred of authority in science or history; with all this already accomplished, one may well ask with Strauss, Are we still Christian? Christian in name, perhaps in temper, yes; but in conviction, for the most part, no. Conviction—honest, earnest, intellectual conviction—on this subject is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. As a profession it still exists, and it will continue to exist in this form so long as the indolence of one class combines with the interest of another for its perpetuation.

C. COHEN.

Christians Climbing Down.

ONE of the phases of modern theological thought which is not without its amusing aspect is the effort of Christian advocates to "climb down" without appearing to do so. The feat requires some amount of intellectual agility. Still more does it demand considerable resources in the way of verbal skill. Nevertheless it is attempted with some show of courage, though the utmost that can be hoped for is a merely partial success. Any success at all must depend upon the extent to which people are in sympathy with the object of the effort, and their willingness to excuse the methods for the sake of the end in view. In other words, the pretence that the "climbing down" is not what it actually is, but, if anything, is a move in an upward direction, can impose on none but those who are only too willing to be deceived.

Whether even these can persuade themselves into a belief that they are satisfied with the pious gymnastics performed may be open to doubt. But they feel it necessary to accord some kind of acquiescence, and so outwardly, at any rate, there is an agreement amongst them that abandonment does not mean defeat, that diminution is in reality development, and that the best way to support a tottering creed is to divest it of its essential features.

When one remembers the attitude of Christian advocates twenty years ago in regard to many cherished doctrines now abandoned as untenable, it is impossible not to feel amazed at the changes that have taken place. Mark Twain, who is something of a philosopher as well as a humorist, once remarked that "the altar cloth of one æon is the door-mat of the next." That is a true saying, though it has taken a much less period to see various theological dogmas dragged from the Holy of Holies and trampled under foot. Christian believers themselves are engaged in this salutary work with an industry that may well excite both astonishment and amusement. Not only do they acknowledge their early illusions, but they are now professing to discover in them the working of a divinely-appointed plan. Thus we learn from the *Christian World* that—

> "To the present generation it is becoming increasingly clear that many things which it had been accustomed to regard as religious fact are really not so, and the revelation is one full of danger to the inner life unless its actual significance is fully explained. The Church has been, in a sense, brought up on illusions, and the plain man who

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is just becoming conscious of this is shocked at the discovery. His first impulse is to cry 'Treachery'! Religion has betrayed him; the teacher has proved false, and is therefore no longer to be regarded."

Quite so; and nothing that this writer proceeds to urge can effectually dispel that very natural sentiment from open and intelligent minds. Unfortunately for him, and the remnant of faith he allows himself, his theory of the "mission of illusion" does not work out in anything like the way he would wish it. Applied to a number of religious beliefs—once accepted, but now discarded—it accentuates rather than removes the difficulties of so-called Divine Revelation. It is quite true, as he says, that the early Church, "whether it looked before or behind it, met the mirage. It looked behind to a view of the Old Testament which we now smile at. In its forward look the first Christian community had a similar experience. It is pathetic for us, as we gaze back from that far-off standpoint, to observe the absolute confidence of those early forecasts and the way in which events have contradicted them; to see how in succession now a Justin Martyr, now an Irenæus, now a Tertullian and a Cyprian, and anon a Jerome and an Augustine, find in the state of the world around them the sure signs of the Advent and the world's end." Just in passing, it may be observed that the expectations of these early Christians were based upon the clear and unmistakable teaching of Christ and his disciples. The early Christians were wrong, as we know. Events have contradicted their forecasts. But so were Christ and his disciples wrong, for with them originated the falsified expectations. Then this writer goes on to say:—

"To-day we have to recognise that a certain portion of the Church creeds were wrought in an atmosphere of illusion. They were constructed to the scale of a pettier universe than that to which we now know ourselves to belong. The creeds are, for one thing, geocentric. They conceive the earth as central, with heaven and hell as adjunct and completion. They are unreal to a view which regards our planet as a dust speck in the infinity of the worlds.

'*At contra nusquam apparent Acherusia templa.*'

"Jacob's ladder no longer reaches to the sky. The heavens have removed far off and become astronomical. In short, the concepts which presided over the Church creeds represent, in the language of a recent writer, 'undeveloped science, imperfect philosophy, and perverted notions of history.' They will have to be revised. Their view of Christianity is steadily giving way in the minds of men to one more in accord with the laws that govern the outside universe and the evolution of the human soul."

Having thus described the present situation, the *Christian World* writer advances the theory that, as "the law of illusion is written broadly in every department of life," so it prevails in religion. He does not think that religion will be the poorer for "the change in some of its surrounding ideas. The previous history of the human movement should be enough to reassure us on this point. What man has found hitherto is that the new reality which he reaches is always greater and more satisfying than the old illusion which it displaces." All this, it will be perceived, is in agreement with the Freethought view that religion is of purely human origin, and is the result of that evolution which governs the physical and moral world. It goes to prove that religion is a natural product—the outcome of ignorance and helplessness, refined and diminished from time to time as knowledge and the strength that it gives increase. To the same extent is disproved the supposition that religion is a special emanation from Deity, supposing a Deity to exist.

If religion originates and proceeds on the lines now suggested, it may well be asked by the plain man where does the Supreme Being come in, and what is the value of a revelation which admittedly conveys error, and so mixes it up with truth that it takes ages to complete the work of elimination.

But can it be seriously argued that "illusion" was a necessary part of "revelation," which is the inevitable inference from the theory now advanced? The pretence that man was unprepared in earlier ages for the illumination he has since of himself attained to is entirely wide of the mark. He might just as well have commenced with religious truth as with what we now know to be religious error. The true relation of the world to the universe, and the fact that the world would long survive the era of the early Church—which are the two instances cited in the *C. W.*—might just as well have been disclosed at first as at last. And so they would have been but for the simple fact that the Scriptural writers and Christ and his disciples and the primitive believers were then, like all the rest of the world, ignorant of the truth. It is suggested that knowledge on these and other matters was designedly withheld in the so-called divine revelation. But where is the evidence that it was ever possessed? After all, the damning fact against the Bible is, not so much that truth was withheld, but that positive error, with all its evil consequences, was solemnly promulgated. If we admit any supernatural agency in the production of the Bible and the establishment of the Church founded upon its teachings, we must recognise the working of a malefic rather than a beneficent spirit—one capable of wilfully misleading mankind, and leaving it through long ages to find out as best it might the truth for itself. The *C. W.* writer, profiting by the self-sacrificing efforts of heretics whom the Church remorselessly persecuted in the past, may "smile" at the view formerly taken of the Old Testament and held until comparatively recent times; but can he truthfully assert that the delusive notions regarding that book were ever a necessary part of the education of the world? From any point of view, the bulk of the fables and foolish fancies at which he now "smiles" were perfectly superfluous when they were written, just as he finds them to be superfluous now. How do we know that the "realities" in the New Testament to which he clings as the essence of true Christian belief may not in like manner turn out hereafter to have been foisted upon us in accordance with this newly-discovered development plan? The "law of illusion," once in operation, will, we suppose, go on. Some religious writer in a *Christian World* of the future may, therefore, be expected to look back and "smile" at the *C. W.'s* present view of the New Testament and of Christ. But, whatever may be in store, is it quite conducive to implicit faith at the present time to learn so much about the "mission of illusion"? The plain man will begin to think that the real present-day want is a "mission" for dispelling illusion, not for explaining and defending it. He will begin to ask whether, through all the long centuries that have gone by, the Almighty has been playing off a joke on his poor, easily misled mortals; or whether, if serious, he has deliberately disseminated or sanctioned the dissemination of gross and grievous error.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Acid Drops.

THE German liner, the *Saale*, which was destroyed so tragically at New York, was just going to leave for Boston to take on board the members of the Christian Endeavor Society who were making a trip to Europe. Are we to consider this as a "judgment"? If so, it seems that the newest big Christian Association is sadly out of favor with God Almighty.

A number or poor wretches, including (it is said) some women, were fastened down below in the burning *Saale*, and fought each other furiously to get to the portholes. The scene is described as appalling. But the grimmest touch of all is to come. Father Brosman was seen on board a small tug giving absolution through the portholes to the struggling and perishing wretches inside! It would take the satiric genius of a Byron to bring out all the significance of that spectacle.

"The catastrophe was the act of God," says Mr. Schwab, the North German Lloyd agent at New York. This is his way of making it out that, "We are not responsible for a dollar's worth of freight or personal indemnity." Piety is generally pretty consistent with self-interest.

If that dreadful fire was really the act of God, there ought to be some means of bringing the perpetrator to book. The destruction of property was bad enough, but the loss of life, and the sufferings of those who perished, were still worse. Not only men, but women and little children, were slowly burnt to cinders. The reporters say it was "like hell." And perhaps Mr. Schwab thinks that if God keeps an everlasting hell to roast his own creatures in, it is quite conceivable that he sets up a foreign branch of it on earth occasionally.

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A special correspondent of the *Glasgow Herald* sends home a very pious effusion from Kroonstadt, chiefly about the sick and wounded, the doctors and the nurses. He says that the men at first were "dying like flies," but they now "thank Providence for the nursing sisters," although Providence afforded them no aid until the sisters appeared upon the scene. This writer talks about "the Almighty" with the greatest familiarity. One would imagine that he dined with the Boss now and then. But perhaps he is only a Scotch minister, with a characteristic amount of religious self-conceit.

Old Moore's Almanack seems to be a greater authority than any of the Hebrew prophets. The 1900 issue contains a hieroglyphic cartoon for July, which includes what may be regarded as a distinct forecast of the Chinese trouble. The figure of a railway train, with the Devil riding in front, clearly points to the N. S. S. excursion. This anticipation of the two greatest events of the present month is calculated to throw Talmage and Baxter into the shade, and even to make them green with envy.

We drew attention recently to the case of the Rev. Mr. Dixon, an American minister, who invoked God's wrath on a brewery, which was soon afterwards struck by lightning, and the brewery company thereupon started an action for damages. In his defence, the reverend gentleman denies responsibility. Others besides himself were praying for the destruction of the building, and it will be impossible for the plaintiffs to prove that it was struck in answer to *his* prayer. Had he been preaching upon the matter, without any fear of awkward consequences, he would probably have more than hinted that the so-called accident at the brewery was a direct answer to his personal supplication; but when there is a possibility of his suffering from this theory, he repudiates it, and declares that the whole subject is involved in obscurity.

With this Dixon case in mind, we were turning over again the other day the pages of a great book by a very great man. We refer to Hume's *History of England*—a work now superseded by more modern and popular Histories, and therefore practically neglected. But it is a great book nevertheless, and its composition is marked by those "careless inimitable beauties" which won the high and competent praise of Gibbon. Well, in turning over the pages of this masterpiece, we noticed a passage we had marked (and forgotten) on an incident in the time of the Heptarchy. Aldefrid, the Northern King, was besieging Chester, and the Britons marched out to oppose him. They brought with them 1,250 monks from the monastery of Bangor, who "stood at a small distance from the field of battle, in order to encourage the combatants by their presence and exhortations." And what was the result? "Aldefrid," the historian says, "inquiring the purpose of this unusual appearance, was told that these priests had come to pray against him. *Then are they as much our enemies*, said he, *as those who intend to fight against us*; and he immediately sent a detachment, who fell upon them, and did such execution that only fifty escaped with their lives." Hume adds that "The Britons, astonished at this event, received a total defeat."

Capital! Capital!! We admire the resolution and common sense of Aldefrid. If the prayers of the clergy in a time of war are of any avail, they are as much combatants as the soldiers themselves, and should be treated as such by the enemy. On the other hand, if their prayers are useless, they are such wretched impostors that it would be almost an act of justice to rid the earth of their presence.

The action of the Powers in China has had one result. In every hotel and restaurant throughout the celestial kingdom the daily bill of fare now includes roast, boiled, and stewed missionary.

This year's Royal Academy exhibition is unusually good. We did not notice, however, that masterpiece by Daub, R.A., "Flea Defending its Young against a Christian Evidence Lecturer."

The *Morning Leader* tells the story of a cliff-fall at Dover in 1810, by which several persons were killed, including a clever little boy artist. A pig, weighing eight score, was also buried, but was dug out alive after a lapse of 160 days, when it was reduced to two score. The wonderful pig—rather *too* wonderful for us—was afterwards exhibited to "ladies and gentlemen" for one shilling, and to "tradesmen" for sixpence. On the supposition, however, that the story is true, a friend sends us the following verses:—

Long time ago
The Blessed Lord
Loved children, though
He swine abhorred.

But children now
May go to Scratch,
So God a sow
From death may snatch.

The Lord does not appear to keep a providential eye on children nowadays. In a single morning paper we note two paragraphs recording the death of Edmund Laurence Abbot, aged nine, at Camberwell, and a child named Harrison, at Kingston. The former fell from the parapet outside an attic window, and the latter was killed in a brake accident.

There's a friend for little children
Above the bright blue sky.

So says the hymn. But *is* there?

There is going to be a fresh rumpus over the School Board education question at Birmingham. The Liberal "compromise" instituted by Dr. Dale in 1873 allows of Bible reading without note or comment in the schools, supplemented by religious instruction given by voluntary visitors on two mornings of the week. But the Church party have been working hard to get control of the Board, and the Chapel party—for that is what the so-called Liberals are—see that some change must be made to checkmate their opponents. Mr. George Cadbury, the Cocoa Christian, and the Rev. F. L. Wiseman, a professional Christian, have therefore induced the Liberal majority to agree to the following change. A short service is to be held in the schools, consisting of a hymn, the Lord's Prayer, and the reading and repeating of selected passages of Scripture. This alteration is supported by a majority of the teachers, who do not seem to relish the prospect of being called upon (through the Church party) to give religious instruction themselves. It is probable, we suppose, that the "Liberals" will win, and continue to control the Board schools on the new lines; but Freethinkers will not be able to take sides with either party in this ridiculous quarrel between Church and Nonconformity. *Their* policy is to get religion swept out of the schools altogether.

Dean Farrar will not find last week's *Church Times* very pleasant reading. If he does not wince at its review of his latest work, *The Life of Lives*, he will be more than mortal. And we know that, beneath a thin veneer of humility, he is rather a proud man—proud of his literary performances—and sensitive, though usually silent, under criticism. His habit of asserting things which are at least doubtful is pointedly commented on. "The possibility of his being mistaken seems to be as foreign as ever to the author's mind." His new work, hints the reviewer, is full of his customary cocksure, headlong conclusions. Everything with him is just what it ought to be for the purpose of the argument immediately in hand. Elsewhere it is something else, equally needed, and defined with equal assurance. In this latest work, as in his others, he revels in a "riot of words."

His habitual fervency of language leads him into exaggeration, which the reviewer regards as extremely perilous in one part of the book—namely, the four chapters which are a "development of the argument for the truth of Christianity drawn from the moral and spiritual supremacy of Christ." Here the *Church Times* seems to think that the Dean has given away the whole case to the sceptic by his reckless exaggeration. Dr. Farrar, appealing to the general belief in the Providence of God, classes the Stoics, Marcus Aurelius, and the rest, as "molehills and thistles amongst mountains and forest trees," which judgment, says the *Church Times*, is ludicrous. A few pages further on Dean Farrar himself writes: "I look upon the 'little golden Pastoral' of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius as the most perfect moral book which heathen antiquity produced."

Then Dean Farrar asserts that in all histories of the nations there can scarcely be found one man of epoch-making eminence who has not believed in God. The *Church Times* characterises this sentence as a "perfectly reckless statement. The names of epoch-making men of whom this could in no sense be asserted crowd upon the mind." Again he appeals to the sages and philosophers, the masters of modern science, of whom he says the foremost have not only had faith in God, but also have believed rightly in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. "What shall we say," asks the *Church Times*, "of the audacity which can make such a statement? Are there no Jews or Unitarians amongst the foremost men of science? Spinoza, Huxley, Helmholtz, Darwin, Spencer—are these not amongst the foremost, or are we asked to accept the statement here made of their belief?"

Yet again, Dean Farrar writes that no sceptic will be able to dispute that not amongst the greatest philosophers, the brightest poets, and the best men whom all former history records, can so much as *one* be found who can be offered as a distant parallel to Jesus Christ. "But that," says the *Church Times*, "is precisely what many sceptics do, as a matter of fact, dispute. To assume their agreement with what they deny is palpably absurd, and brings the whole argument to nought."

The candid reviewer in the *Church Times* does not hesitate to allude to the "vein of falsehood" running through this portion of Dean Farrar's books, and adds that "a shrewd opponent of Christianity could hardly find a better opening

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than is here afforded." All of which, as we have said, must be very pleasant reading for the literary Dean.

The Rev. Price Hughes has been preaching on "Humility." At first we thought that someone had been accusing Mr. Price Hughes of humility. But no; there are plenty of foolish people in the world, but none quite so foolish as that. He doesn't himself even make a pretence of displaying that virtue—if it be one. "Created," he says, "in the image of God, we are a 'divine workmanship,' and each one of us has an inestimable value in the sight of God." If this is true of the common ruck of people, what, indeed, must be the heavenly estimate of Price Hughes? Even he might blush to tell us.

It seems now to be pretty clear that the gifted Sheldon would have done well to stop at home in the States. He has turned out to be a great disappointment here. He spoke at a Temperance Convention at Edinburgh, and referred to Topeka as a city where the sight of a drunken man is as rare as that of a Sabbath-breaker in Edinburgh. A sigh interrupted him, and a whispered "Alas!" which he understood. "Not a good simile," said someone; and Mr. Sheldon replied: "I am sorry; it used to be so. Well, then, I will say as rare as the sight of tramcars in motion in the streets of Edinburgh on Sunday." After this, we are not surprised to learn from a religious weekly that "there were persons in the audience who were a little disappointed in Mr. Sheldon's speech; it was not exactly the sort of thing which was expected of him.

The best advice that can be given to this reverend and sadly over-rated visitor would be either to make "tracks" at once for home, or to remain in strict seclusion during the rest of his visit. Even religious audiences are not entirely devoid of perception.

They have a way—which is quite their own—of receiving episcopal suggestions at the Church of St. Alban's, Holborn. The other day they had High Mass there in honor of their patron saint. A letter was read from the Bishop of London suggesting the setting apart of the festival as a "day of abstinence." The reading of the letter was immediately followed by a substantial lunch.

Some years ago a parishioner of Christ Church, Clifton, published for private circulation and use a book called *Selections from the Old and New Testaments*, from which large portions were omitted on grounds of "religion and decency." He also expressed his disbelief in the doctrines of eternal punishment and the existence of the Devil. This was thought sufficient by the then vicar, the Rev. Dr. Flavel Cook, to justify him in repelling the parishioner from Holy Communion. On appeal to the Judicial Committee the sentence of the Arches Court was reversed, it being held that "no legal cause of repulsion was shown." In a "huff" at thus being over-ridden, the vicar resigned his living. The other day he died. Whether he ever forgave that Judicial Committee does not appear, but it is believed that he never quite recovered from the shock of discovering such a terrible heretic amongst his congregation.

"I would like to boil a bishop in oil!" says one of the characters in Mr. H. G. Wells's latest novel, *Love and Mr. Lewisham*. A very horrible desire—almost as bad as the actual treatment of heretics by the Church when it rejoiced in unlimited power. But, of course, Mr. Lewisham does not mean what he says. He explains: "They know perfectly well the case against what they teach. They know that it is neither madness nor wickedness nor any great harm of others not to believe. They know perfectly well that a man may be as honest as the day—right and decent in every way—and not believe in what they teach. And they know that it only wants the edge off a man's honor for him to profess anything in the way of belief. If a man is well off, they will truckle to him no end, though he laughs at all their teaching. They will take gold plate from company promoters, and rent from insanitary houses. But if a man is poor, and doesn't profess to believe in what some of them scarcely believe themselves, they wouldn't lift a finger to help him against the ignorance of their fellows."

The Rev. Father James Foley, after preaching at Bury St. Edmunds on Sunday night, was found dead in his bedroom on Monday morning. If this had happened to a Freethought lecturer, what would the religious press have said?

Who says that popular culture is not increasing? A lady resident in a famous West-end square, the other day, reproached her cook for an unconscionable delay in the serving of dinner. The lady was calmly told that it was due to a heated discussion between the cook and the butler. "Really!" said her mistress; "and what was the argument about?" "Well, mum," replied the cook, "it was about whether we was descended from Darwin or not."

Signor Crispi, interviewed on the Chinese crisis, declares that the "Christian missionaries are responsible for all that may happen and for all the outcome of present events."

A couple recently presented themselves at the altar of St. Mary's Church, Prittlewell, for the solemnization of marriage. The vicar, the Rev. E. Kimber, commenced the ceremony, but suddenly broke off with the remark, "I cannot marry you," and then disappeared into the vestry. The disconsolate couple had to retire from the church un-united. It seems that the man of God had found out that the bridegroom had been divorced. The bridegroom appears to have been a man of precious little spirit, or he would have followed the parson into the vestry and kicked him for his public affront to the lady. However, one cannot sympathise with couples who go to the church under such circumstances. They court indignity, and, to some extent, deserve it for in any way seeking the services of "churlish priests." The registrar's office is always available. Parsons would begin to think less of themselves if they were but systematically ignored.

Two curious paragraphs appeared in Sunday's *Reynolds'*—curious, that is, because they were printed under the same heading in the same column. The first paragraph summarised a letter to the editor from a correspondent who spoke of the National Secular Society as being to all intents and purposes dead. The second paragraph announced that the N. S. S. was going on excursion to Brighton, and was to have "a big tea" in the Skating Rink. Hundreds of corpses must have travelled to Brighton, if the first paragraph told the truth. We recollect nothing like it since Sennacherib's army awoke in the morning and found they were all dead men.

We believe the gentleman who wrote to *Reynolds'* about the poor defunct N. S. S. is a Secularist who has not succeeded in getting everybody to agree with him on certain outside questions. He is a good fellow in other respects, but he cannot stand *this* sort of treatment, and has therefore excommunicated himself. That is a way some people have. And as it doesn't do to admit that any Society can live without them, they go about announcing its decease.

"Murder and Suicide by an Atheist" is the heading given to the report of an inquest at Holloway, by a weekly newspaper that should have known better. This so-called Atheist, we learn from the evidence, believed in witches and ghosts! He wrote a letter in which he spoke of a woman long deceased as still living, and as being a witch still capable of injuring the living. Upon this letter the coroner observed: "Perhaps his mind was affected"; apparently forgetful that the Bible sanctions the belief in witches, and that the third person in the Trinity is a "holy" ghost. The deceased further wrote that the "world is ruled by unseen things." Obviously this man was no Atheist; in fact, as regards witchcraft, he was more of a believer in "Divine Revelation" than the coroner himself.

This so-called Atheist had for some time been a disciple (so to speak) of Sir Wilfrid Lawson. What a wonder it was, then, that the newspapers did not seize upon this fact. It would have made a capital headline—"Murder and Suicide by a Teetotaller." People would have wondered what teetotal drink it was that screwed him up to the shooting point.

Another instance of mental derangement is disclosed in an inquest on a Wesleyan Lay preacher who was found dead under the floor of his house. Amongst his delusions was the belief that he would be carried up to heaven like Elijah, also that he could live without food.

There is a certain pathetic humor about a yarn told by the Rev. Ian Maclaren this week. Some little time ago a slum mother was instructing her little girl in Scripture knowledge, and was explaining to her about the Garden of Eden. The child was much impressed. At last she said: "It must have been very beautiful, mother. I suppose now it's all built over."

A publican has been summoned at Hyde for allowing hymns to be sung in his club room. The technical offence was that he had no music licence. It seems odd that you may, without a licence, howl Moody and Sankey everywhere except in a pub. Teetotallers ought certainly to protest against this exception, for what better plan of keeping people out of pubs on Sunday evenings than the introduction of unlimited hymn-singing on the licensed premises?

Apropos of the retaliatory summonses taken out against Sabbatarians by Swansea tradespeople, the *People* rejoices that cant has got what may be called a backhander. It mentions that "not long ago, when an article by a London critic had revived certain provincial prejudices against actors, the stage was denounced from a Swansea pulpit, and a movement was started that threatened to close the theatre to the members of one of the most popular dissenting congregations. The management of a London company thereupon faced the bigoted Protestants with a sermon in print that aroused the friends of the drama, and the controversy raged with

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vigor. When a community is attacked for its narrowness, not to say 'religious tyranny,' as Swansea is being very properly attacked at the present time, it is pleasant to give the other side a recognition. On the occasion of the theatrical trouble just mentioned the Mayor of Swansea, a member of the very chapel whose minister had denounced the stage as an annex to the bottomless pit, convincing himself of the high reputation of the players who had arrived in the midst of the crusade, invited the principals to dinner. Thereupon the management gave a reception on the stage, which was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress and many distinguished burgesses. This was an honest and courageous answer to a bigoted 'minister of the Gospel,' and it was a fitting punishment for him that the majority of his congregation made a special point of attending the theatre during the week of the visit in question."

The *People* further observes: "It is gratifying to know that the persecution of the little traders of Swansea is meeting with an equally notable protest against cant and intolerance. Both these vices of the ultra sanctimonious, who too often make their professions a cloak for villainy of some kind, are rampant in London itself. 'The Society for Promoting the Due Observance of the Lord's Day' has, however, in its latest report, to lament the growth of Sunday music throughout the land, and the extension of wholesome recreation in the shape of picture galleries, museums, Sunday lectures, and Sunday concerts of high-class music. The Mawworms who issue this report go so far as to suggest that the reverses to our troops in South Africa were a judgment upon us for our neglect of the Sabbath. Fortunately, the very excess of their rebukes makes their homilies nauseous to honest and independent men and women, so that they frequently check a pernicious influence that might otherwise have effect on the conduct of the people."

£117,227 is a very tidy sum to be left behind by a deceased apostle of the poor Carpenter's Son of Nazareth. According to the *Times*, this amount represents the gross value of the estate of the late Rev. Charles Twemlow Royds, rector of Hupham, Lancashire. There are a few trifling legacies in the reverend gentleman's will, and one of them is positively facetious. It is £10 to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

The second volume of the Cardiff Corporation Records, as we learn by an article in the *South Wales Echo*, gives some interesting items about the burning in effigy of *Tom Pain* in 1792. The following bill was made out and duly entered by the Corporation: "For the use of Tom Pain: Hat and oil-case, 3s.; Fales shirt and cravvet, 2s. 6d.; Gloves and Hose, 4s. 2d.; Shooes, 7s. 6d.; the Carpender wood and Labour, 5s.; Black Ribbon, 4d.; To making the Efegi of Tom pain, £1 1s.; To three Days serving the publications, 6s.; £2 9s. 6d." A further slip orders the payment of the Hangman's fee: "Pay Watkin Williams Hangman the sum of four shillings for Hanging Tom Pain, and at last burnt him."

Thomas Paine was not *then* burnt in effigy as the "infidel" author of the *Age of Reason*, but as the republican author of the *Rights of Man*. The former work was not published at that time. The latter work had brought about a trial for treason, and Paine had fled to France in order to escape the hangman. No doubt he was burnt in effigy in many other places, and it would be interesting to ascertain what information on this point is contained in other Corporation records. Meanwhile, it should be noticed that he was already *Tom* Paine (or Pain). The religious bigots, therefore, did not invent that familiar appellation. They merely borrowed it from the political bigots, and handed it down to future generations.

Commenting on the Chinese treatment of missionaries, the *Sunday Chronicle* observes: "There is nothing we all of us condemn so strongly as religious intolerance. That is why, I suppose, Mr. Kensit and his followers are still at large, and why the medical men in Peckham had such a busy time of it one night a few weeks ago; why, also, the police in Belfast have to be on the alert on the eve of certain anniversaries. But for Chinese intolerance there is still this to be said: that our missionaries take with them not only another religion (and gunboats), but another system of morals, a system of morals fundamentally different from that which has for centuries held the field in China. Now to hit at a people's system of morals, its social and domestic customs, is to hit in the rawest spot of all. The Mormon missionary, for instance, who preaches polygamy lies not always on a bed of roses when he preaches to a monogamous people. Why, then, should we look for a much softer lot for a Christian missionary who preaches monogamy to a polygamous people?"

The Rev. G. S. Reaney, vicar of Christ Church, Greenwich, writing in the July number of *St. Luke's Church Monthly*, deals with the question, "Why do they not come to church?" He admits that the masses are not degenerating morally; on the contrary, they have much improved during the last fifty years. But they prefer recreation and amusement to attending the house of the Lord, and Sunday is fast becoming a holiday instead of a holy day. Thus there is an "increased secularity of life" amongst them; moreover, they have almost lost "the sense of sin"—which, by the way, is the morbid emotion that all the men of God exploit for a living.

An enterprising nigger at Tyler, Texas, took advantage of the late eclipse of the sun. He appeared as a stranger in a colored church on the previous Sunday night, and told the congregation that the Lord was going to play tricks with the orb of day. This, he said, was intended as a sign of the Lord's displeasure at their miserly contributions. When the eclipse began the negroes ran off to their church, with plenty of change in their pockets, which they handed over to the Lord's messenger, who was there to receive it. They never saw him again.

The *Church Monthly* for July rebukes "half the infidels of the present day" for speaking of what they have never studied, and of things of which they are very ignorant. Our contemporary goes to the length of quoting with approval the saying of that fine old bigot, Dr. Johnson, that no honest man could be a Deist, for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity. Well, that settles it. Every unbeliever is a rascal. But this is unfortunately no proof of the opposite proposition, that every Christian is an honest man.

Our contemporary, the *Church Monthly*, for instance, cites Dr. Johnson as its authority for the statement that "Hume owned to a clergyman in the diocese of Durham that he had never read the New Testament with attention." This is very unlikely of Hume, to begin with; in the next place, a nameless clergyman somewhere in the diocese of Durham is a very vague witness; and, in the third place, Dr. Johnson was just the man to repeat any nonsense about one he hated—and he hated Hume for several reasons besides his being a Freethinker.

Even if Hume had not read the New Testament with attention—such attention as would be given to it by the clergyman he is supposed (or feigned) to have spoken to—the fact would not in the least invalidate his scepticism. The *proofs* of Christianity must, from the nature of the case, be chiefly sought *outside* the Bible. The *contents* of Christianity are quite snother thing. One need not recollect all the details of all the miracles in the Bible in order to decide for oneself whether miracles are credible. Hume discussed the general question in a masterly manner; and, although he has often been answered, he has never been refuted. Indeed, his real argument is generally left untouched.

The man of God who has been put by the Bishop of Coventry in charge of St. Andrew's, Bordesley, during the vacancy, finds himself minister in a parish of "over 24,000 souls," and he writes to the *Birmingham Daily Mail* that his congregation does not exceed twenty all told. The reverend gentleman makes a touching appeal for a number of things, including "£100 to meet existing liabilities." He refers to what will be done "as soon as the gas has been reconnected," so we suppose it was cut off by the hard-hearted Gas Company—or was it the Birmingham Corporation? This is very sad. They never ought to want "gas" in a church.

The editor of the *Sunday Reader* notes "considerable heartburnings among the infidel fraternity" in consequence of his publication of Mr. Waldron's articles, which are really the weakest stuff we ever read. We wish him a better contributor. As for the "heartburnings"—well, we can only say "Good God!"

Evidently the Rev. Dr. Jesse Young was quite too good for the editorial chair of the *Central Christian Advocate* of St. Louis. He has been turned out in consequence of his advanced views on the Higher Criticism and other matters. Nevertheless, in his valedictory address, he has a Parthian shot at his persecutors. "We have kept," he says, "in mind the fact, which some seem to have ignored, that we are living in an age of transition. We warn those who need the admonition that it would be a dreadful thing to allow the Church to wake up some day to get its first impression of the new truths concerning the Bible from outside and hostile sources."

Miss Hasbrouck, an instructor in history in the high school at Holyoke, Massachusetts, has had to tender her resignation, in consequence of her inability to tell orthodox falsehoods. A student asked her if Jesus Christ was an only son, and she replied: "No, he is one of a family of ten brothers and sisters." This is strictly in accordance with the New Testament, which mentions four of Jesus Christ's brothers, and refers to an uncertain number of his sisters. But it was blasphemy in the ears—pretty long ones, no doubt—of the Rev. Mr. Harkins, who denounced the honest and accurate lady teacher from his pulpit, and thus procured what was practically her discharge from her situation.

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N.B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stonecutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 8, Finsbury Park, at 3.30, Freethought Demonstration.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—July 8, at 3.30, Finsbury Park Freethought Demonstration.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

R. P. EDWARDS.—See "Sugar Plums." The date, not being mentioned, could not be included.

B. ROBERTS, and OTHERS.—Mr. Forder is no longer agent for the Freethought Publishing Company, and the shop at 28 Stonecutter-street is closed. All orders for literature should be sent direct to the Company at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C. We are sorry you cannot get any answer from Mr. Forder respecting the orders you sent him, but in face of our repeated announcements in the *Freethinker* we cannot be held responsible for the loss or the delay.

J. S., W. C., and others, have written rather sharply about not receiving the *Freethinker*. We beg to remind them that we have several times called attention to the fact that we had good reason for believing Mr. Forder's subscription list to be very inaccurate, and that we have asked subscribers whose weekly copies did not reach them to communicate with us, stating the period covered by their subscriptions. This was accompanied by the promise on our part to see that the paper should be sent to them during such periods. What more could we possibly do? It is ridiculous to be angry with *us*.

C. D. S.—Thanks. See paragraph.

J. EDWARDS.—It is enough that you are obliged to Mr. Neale for his reply. Whether you agree with him or not is a personal matter.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

HORACE DAWSON.—See "Acid Drops."

J. G. BARTRAM.—See "Sugar Plums." Pleased to hear you have found a civil C. E. lecturer at last. It is a rare species.

G. DICKINSON.—We think with you that all the excursionists to Brighton enjoyed themselves on Sunday. They looked remarkably happy for a lot of "damned" Atheists. By the way, this is not swearing, but orthodox Christian language. Glad to hear you took 11s. worth of *Freethinkers*, tracts, and pamphlets with you, and distributed them to the best advantage. Thanks also for the cuttings. The gentleman who thinks the N. S. S. is "on the high road to decay" should have joined the excursion and worked off his bile on the Brighton front.

W. SIMONS.—Your lecture-notice for Kingsland Green reached us last week on Thursday. The postmark on your card was "July 27"—Wednesday. Tuesday morning is our latest time for receiving such things.

V. C. MARTIN.—Why not read Luke iii. for yourself? If you did, you would see that the genealogy of Jesus is there traced, not through Mary, but through Joseph. It is the same in Matthew i. The Jews did not trace genealogies through females. There is nothing wrong with the *Bible Handbook* statement. It is absolutely accurate.

ALFRED HURST.—Pleased to hear you intend to take at least one Share in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, shortly. A large number of Freethinkers ought to be getting into the same frame of mind.

W. NELSON.—See "Sugar Plums." Such announcements can hardly go under Lecture Notices.

H. PERCY WARD.—Pleased to have your friendly letter. Keep on with the work, as you are doing; and keep on with nothing else. You are bound to succeed then. We have always been glad to do anything we could, however little it might be, to ease the very hard path of young men of ability who devote themselves to Freethought propaganda. The more there are of them the better we are pleased.

J. T. JONES.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

DR. PARK.—Your letter shall appear in our next.

RECEIVED.—Humanity—Leeds Daily News—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Sunday Reader—Truthseeker (New York)—Ancient Mother Worship—Humane Review—St. Luke's Church Monthly—New York Sun—Crescent—Yarmouth Mercury—Glasgow Herald—Two Worlds—Isle of Man Times—Zoroaster, by Aristo (Watts & Co.).

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

THERE has been considerable delay in obtaining the necessary permits for this year's Sunday Freethought Demonstrations in London. Miss Vance, as the N. S. S. Secretary, wrote more than once, and finally had to call at the London County Council's office, where she found the gentlemen who were responsible still going leisurely to work, as though they were the originals of some of Dickens's sketches of the Circumlocution Office. The curious thing is that, although it takes the N. S. S. weeks to get an answer, the Christian Evidence people are somehow or other treated with great celerity. They have, on more than one occasion, learned of the Freethought Demonstration on a Thursday and obtained permission for a rival Demonstration before the Sunday. We are a little puzzled to understand why such permissions are given to them at all. One Demonstration is quite enough at one time on one spot. Of course the object of the Christian Evidence people is to cause confusion and disorder. They always pitch as near to the Freethought Demonstration as they can, and have generally to be removed to a greater distance by the constables. What they want is, not so much to hold a meeting of their own, as to break up the meeting of their opponents. We may add that an official letter has been sent to the County Council on this point.

The first of these projected Sunday Freethought Demonstrations will take place this afternoon (July 8) in Finsbury Park. Mr. Wilson has kindly promised us a brake and a pair of horses, as on former occasions. The brake, which serves as a platform, will be stationed above the band-stand, and the speaking will begin at 3.30. Mr. Foote, Mr. Watts, and Mr. Moss will be present for certain. There will probably be other speakers, but we are not certain about them at the moment of writing.

North London Freethinkers should do all they can to advertise this Finsbury Park Demonstration. The notice is a very short one, owing to the delay already referred to, and a special effort will be necessary to make the gathering known to the public who might attend it.

The other Demonstrations will, as far as possible, be held on Sunday evenings. It is a bit cooler then than it is in the afternoon, and a larger number of people are out of doors.

Arrangements have been made for Demonstrations at Clerkenwell Green (July 15, morning), Regent's Park (July 15, evening), Hyde Park (July 22), West Ham (July 29), Brockwell Park (August 12), and Victoria Park (August 19). Other places will be arranged for if possible.

The Annual Excursion of the National Secular Society took place on Sunday, and was in every way a great success. Hundreds of members and friends of the Society journeyed by special train from London to Brighton, and spent the best part of the day there amidst fresh air and in sight of the sea. Fortunately the weather held up until tea-time (5.30), and lifted when tea was over sufficiently to allow of a stroll on the front to those who did not mind a slight sprinkling. The return journey was started soon after eight o'clock, and the arrival in London was in good time for all to get home conveniently.

Amongst the excursionists were G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, V. Roger, J. Neate, E. Bater, "Chilperic" "Mimnermus," G. J. Warren, C. A. Watts, and—well, really a great many more well-known Freethinkers than we can give a list of. The fair sex was generously represented. Miss Vance was present, of course, as the busy Secretary; also Mrs. Foote and two of her girls, Mrs. "Chilperic," Mrs. Henderson, Mrs. and Miss Wilson, and—well, here again we must come to an abrupt finish.

During the afternoon Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts paid a visit to Mr. G. J. Holyoake, whom they had the pleasure of finding in good health—*very* good health, considering his

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eighty-four years. They induced him to come down to the tea party in the Skating Rink, which, by the way, is a very handsome and commodious hall. Mr. Holyoake met with an enthusiastic reception, and his speech was much applauded. He said that he wanted them all to understand that, while age was impairing his sight and rendering him deaf, it brought no sort of change in his convictions; on the contrary, he was a firmer Freethinker (if that were possible) than ever. Mr. Foote added a few words as Chairman.

Another incident of the afternoon was a Freethought meeting on the beach—a novelty at Brighton. It was an impromptu affair. An orthodox speaker was reviling leading Freethinkers, and, after opposing him, Messrs. Moss, Heaford, and Roger started a meeting of their own, which was large, orderly, and attentive.

There was a rivalry amongst the London Branches in regard to this Excursion. Each tried to outdistance the others in the sale of tickets. We are informed that the Finsbury Branch came out a good first in the competition.

Some of the ticket sellers worked very hard—particularly Messrs. Bater, Leat, Quay, Frankel, Munton, and Schaller. Mr. Quay worked so hard that he got left behind at Victoria Station. He was so anxious to fill the train that he just missed it himself—much to the regret of his friends.

The Birmingham Branch held its annual picnic on Sunday last, and had a fine drive to Stratford-on-Avon and back. Old Sol was in a good humor, and beamed approvingly on the Sunday desecration committed by the four brakesful of heretics and their friends. Everyone seemed to be having a good time. The only drawback was that all the places of interest to Shakespeare lovers—excepting the church—were closed. About ninety ladies and gentlemen—to say nothing of the one baby present—did justice to a substantial tea. Messrs. J. Partridge, W. T. Pitt, and C. Steptoe were heartily and unanimously thanked for the admirable arrangements they had made for the comfort of the "saints."

The West London Branch has just held its half-yearly meeting. The report stated that the Branch did perhaps the best work of all the London Branches, for not only were meetings held regularly during the summer in Hyde Park and at Kilburn and Hammersmith, but the propaganda was carried on during the rest of the year by means of Sunday discussions. Unfortunately this Branch is handicapped by the new rule forbidding collections and the sale of literature in the Royal Parks. The balance sheet showed about £3 in hand and other assets to the value of £8. The cash surplus was due to the River Excursion last July, the success of which was mainly owidg to the exertions of Mr. Munton. This year the separate Branch excursion has been dropped, in the interest of the general excursion to Brighton; and it will, therefore, be necessary for the members and friends to come forward liberally with their subscriptions and donations. Mr. R. P. Edwards resigned the honorary secretaryship, in spite of requests that he would continue to hold it, and Mr. G. Parsons was elected in his place. Mr. Munton was re-elected treasurer.

Moncure Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine* has now been translated into French. The fact of the translation being the work of M. Felix Rabbe is a guarantee of its excellence. M. Rabbe's *Life of Shelley* has been translated into English.

Mr. H. A. Cumber, writing to Miss Vance from Valparaiso, and acknowledging the receipt of a portrait of Mr. Foote—which he says is "really an excellent likeness, and quite the same as my own mental portrait of him"—says that what an Englishman notices first in South America is "the elementary sanitation of the towns and the utter absence of personal cleanliness amongst the people." "I suppose," he adds, "there will always be an affinity between filth and the Catholic faith." This correspondent, who left England a few months ago, sends home his best wishes for the good old cause.

Another Freethinker, whose name has often appeared in Secular subscription lists—Mr. W. H. Deakin—writes to Mr. Foote from Calcutta, under date of June 14, with the thermometer at 106 in the shade. But the sultry heat did not diminish his interest in the Freethought cause in old England. "Allow me," he says, "to offer you my hearty congratulations on the successful attainment and opening of your new premises. After the many struggles against bigotry and prejudice you have had all round (in this age of liberty of thought!), it is an accomplishment for which the Freethought party ought to feel grateful."

Mr. Deakin remarks that the missionaries do not appear to make much headway out there, considering the fact that their first church was established as far back as 1593. He also notes that the Britishers never employ a Christianised native as a servant if they can help it. Whatever small vices the native may have in his natural state, he is pretty certain to take on drunkenness in addition when he becomes a Christian. As for the missionaries themselves, Mr. Deakin observes: "We always see them going for a drive in a dashing turn-out, with a liveried groom and coachman; very much in imitation of the Carpenter's Son who had not where to lay his head!" Our correspondent adds: "I get the *Freethinker* regularly, and appreciate it very much, for I do not feel so far away when I read it."

The *Yarmouth Mercury* prints a smart letter from Mr. J. M. Headley in reply to Father Scott, who will find it difficult to answer.

Mr. Cohen had a good meeting on Sunday evening on the Newcastle-on-Tyne Town Moor. About 1,500 people were present. Mr. Boyce, a Christian Evidence lecturer, had special opportunity afforded him for opposition. He made use of the time in a gentlemanly manner—which is rather unusual in that locality; and Mr. Cohen replied to the satisfaction of all his friends.

The South Shields Branch took advantage of Mr. Cohen's presence in the neighborhood, and got him to address an open-air meeting in the Market Place. His lecture was highly appreciated by a large audience. Two orthodox disputants offered some very feeble opposition. In the unavoidable absence of the Branch president, Mr. S. M. Peacock, the chair was taken by the secretary, Mr. R. Chapman.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch holds its annual meeting to-day (July 8) at three o'clock at 1 Granger-street, for the election of officers, etc. All members are requested to attend.

The Sheffield Secular Society goes on excursion to-day (July 8). Members and friends are to meet at 7.50 a.m. in front of the Midland Station, to travel by the 8.10 train to Grindleford, whence conveyances will take the party by road near the Derwent to Matlock Bath, returning in time for the 8.27 p.m. train for home.

Mr. A. B. Moss's article on "God and Evolution" and a long letter by Mr. W. P. Ball in reply to "Chilperic" will appear in our next issue. They are in type, but are crowded out of this issue by the pressure of other matter.

A review of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* appeared in last week's *Reynolds's Newspaper*. Our contemporary says that this "neat little volume ought to be read by everyone desirous of the truth in such matters." "Mr. Foote's style," it adds, "is always bright, and the topics dealt with are of a nature to awaken interest even in the dullest mind."

The House that Jack Built.

AN EXTRAVAGANZA.

I.—GEOCENTRIC.

ONCE upon a time it was my good fortune to meet Jack, and to inspect the wonderful house which he built. I account this a distinct gain, because it has always appeared to me that this ancient nursery legend is marked by one obvious defect. The poet leaves us completely in the dark as to the design, the capacity, and the general appearance of the house of which Jack was at once architect and builder. I therefore deem it an auspicious circumstance that I am in a position to make good so serious an omission.

But suffer me to go on with my story. To commence with, the proportions of the house that Jack built were truly astounding. I can speak with authority on this point, because I carefully measured it every way with a six-inch rule which I always carry in my pocket. I found it to be exactly twenty furlongs in length, twenty furlongs in breadth, and twenty furlongs in height. My readers will now begin to recognise, as they never recognised before, the underlying facts which have helped to maintain the renown of Jack's house. They will readily perceive that throughout all time it has been positively unequalled for size. Hence is no doubt derived the world-wide fame of the house that Jack built; hence do we account for the thrilling verse which has perpetuated its memory through countless centuries.

The walls of this marvellous house were built throughout of transparent ebony, which had been specially prepared from trees grown in the forests of Utopia. Its roof was painted on the under side a brilliant blue, and on the upper side it was overlaid with pure gold to a depth of several feet. From this ceiling were suspended by invisible chains countless

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beautiful lamps, which varied in size and brilliance. The largest of these would about equal in magnitude an ordinary cart-wheel, and the next would be about as far round as a large dinner-plate. Some might have been mistaken for glowing billiard balls, whilst others studded the blue like tiny sparkling pin points. These lights did not permanently occupy any one station, but were moved about from one position to another, and were liable to be extinguished at certain periods.

As this house was of so vast a height, it may occasion surprise when I state that it consisted of but one story. The ground floor, however, was laid out with an excess of care, and bore a singular resemblance to a miniature continent. Through it flowed diminutive rivers of real water, and there were also dwarf mountains capped with pure white snow. Forests of tiny living trees ornamented one part, and meadows of plush-like grass enriched another. Here and there were clusters of lakelets, and in one portion of the ground was to be found a reduced model of an active volcano. All these elaborate productions were Jack's own handiwork, and great was the delight which he took therein.

But the most remarkable part of my story consists in the fact that Jack's house was inhabited by myriads of living creatures, which varied in size and form and feature. Some of these bore a curious resemblance to human beings viewed through the wrong end of a telescope. For the accommodation of these diminutive men, women, and children, Jack had constructed miniature hamlets, villages, towns, and cities. Jack had a wonderful affection for these wee humans, because he had himself made them by way of pastime and for his own enjoyment. Here I wish it to be distinctly understood that this is no fairy-tale, but actual historical fact. The real purpose for which Jack built this unique house was, firstly, for his own pleasure, and, secondly, for the advantage of the small folk who dwelt therein, and who were the product of his own busy hand and fertile brain.

II.—Heliocentric.

A thousand years went by, and again in my wanderings I met Jack, and again I saw his unsurpassable house. Once more I beheld its walls of transparent ebony, and once more I checked its dimensions with my six-inch rule. To outward appearance the house was unchanged; but as soon as I viewed the internal arrangements, I saw at once that a startling transformation had been effected. The only feature which recalled my former knowledge of the place was the countless host of brilliant lamps. These, indeed, had increased in number, and were now not only suspended from the ceiling, but were hung in festoons upon the walls, and were even grouped in clusters upon the floor of the house.

The principal object, however, which now attracted my attention was a massive globe of steaming, fiery metal which was placed exactly in the centre of the building, equi-distance from walls and floor and ceiling. This blazing sphere was fixed in its place by immovable iron rods, and the heat it gave out was enormous, besides lighting up every corner of the house. Again, I observed that at convenient distances from this fiery ball there were other smaller balls composed of mud and mist, and that these smaller balls seemed to move around the large central ball.

But the more I looked, the greater was my perplexity as to the fate of the little peoples who formerly had occupied the minute cottages and palaces clustered on the floor of Jack's house, for every trace of these had disappeared. The problem vexed my soul so much that at last I went in search of Jack, and to him I propounded my question. Then Jack explained to me that during the thousand years which had elapsed since my previous visit his little humans had still further attenuated in size. I then asked Jack to show them to me, but this he declared was impossible. As I was still dissatisfied, he bade me look upon the balls of mud and mist which were circling around the central fiery globe.

"Seest thou," he said, "the third of those revolving spheres?"

(My readers must bear in mind that Jack was born a great many thousand years ago, which fact is sufficient to account for his somewhat archaic mode of speech.)

I looked carefully, and distinguished a hunk of dirt which was probably about equal in magnitude to a Dutch cheese. Then I told Jack what I saw.

"Well," answered he, "that is where my dear little children now live."

At this I smiled sceptically, for it seemed beyond all doubt that Jack was making game of me. However, the man was so much in earnest, and he explained to me with such a wealth of scientific words the processes which brought about this marvellous attenuation, that at last I became convinced, and believed in him with all my heart.

However, I could not help wondering what purpose was served by the other balls of mud and mist which rolled round and round the flaming orb in the middle of the house. I speculated whether it was not possible that some, at least, of the diminutive folk had found a lodgment thereon. It seemed hard to believe that all the human fry should have congregated on one lump, when, to all appearance, others were just as habitable. I disclosed my doubts to Jack, but, strange to say, he received them somewhat churlishly.

"No," he said, "all my children live on the one sphere."

"But," persisted I, "what, then, is the use of the other balls?"

"I put them there," he answered shortly, "to make things a little brighter on the sphere where all my interests are focussed. By their reflective capabilities they help at times to light up the place a bit."

And this was all I could get out of Jack.

III.—Cosmic.

A thousand years went by, and once more it was my lot to fall in with Jack, and to survey his house, which never can be beaten. Once again I beheld the walls of transparent ebony, and measured its proportions with my six-inch rule. Again I marked that the outward form was unaltered; but the internal economy was, if possible, more completely transformed than upon the last occasion. Within the precincts of the house was a countless number of sparkling balls of fire, every one of them being in active motion. They varied in size from almost imperceptible sparks to spheres of perhaps one inch in diameter. But the thing that caused me the most astonishment was that nowhere could I discern the blazing orb which formerly had been so securely fixed at the heart of the house. So far as the eye could see permanence existed nowhere.

Before I had ceased to marvel at the wonders which now met my gaze, I found Jack was standing by my side. Thereupon I asked him what he had done with the flaming globe which had formerly given light and heat to all the place. Then Jack bade me look at a point within the house about two hundred fathoms from where we stood.

"Seest thou," he said, "a scintillating pellet, the diameter of which may be about the seventieth part of an inch?"

"Nay," I retorted, "you ask too much. My eyes are not so young as they were. You cannot reasonably expect me to distinguish so minute a speck at so vast a distance."

So Jack handed me a powerful glass, and, after considerable pains, I thought I made out the tiny ball of which he spoke.

"That," said Jack, "is the mighty orb which hung in the middle of my house when last thou visitedst it."

I was becoming used to believing great things, but this revelation staggered me. However, after more lucid explanation on Jack's part, I accepted the incontrovertible truth.

But, after many hours of sober reflection, it occurred to me that Jack had not informed me what he had done with his wee human children, so I again sought him. Jack thereupon explained that his little bairnies lived on the same old lump of mud and mist, but that it would avail nothing to show it me.

"This little ball," said he, "has become so insignificant a grain of dust that, if held in the palm of thine hand, it would be scarcely discernible."

"And do you still," I ventured to ask, "expend all your care and devotion upon this solitary, minute particle and upon its infinitesimal inhabitants?"

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A smile of calm content played across the features of Jack.

"Thinkest thou," he quietly asked, "that I allow my mental balance to be disturbed by the scale of things? It is even as I have said. All my thought is for the comfort, the enjoyment, and the happiness of these children of my love. For them have I hung these myriad lamps in air, and provided every boon which has entered into my imagination to conceive."

It was at this point that I, for the first time, began to mark an alteration in my companion. Jack always had been a fine fellow, but now one could not fail to be impressed by his truly noble carriage. There was about him a certain mien of grandeur which was lacking in the earlier days of our acquaintanceship. It was clear that Jack had developed greatly since first I knew him.

But even now, whilst I was still looking at Jack, he startled me by inquiring if I had lately measured the walls of his house. So I felt in my pocket for my rule, and here comes the strangest part of my adventures. I searched diligently, but with all my searching I could nowhere find the walls of transparent ebony. I wandered many leagues, but failed to discover that the house had walls or boundaries of any description. Wherever I went, I beheld only the same persistent succession of dazzling fire-balls, varied at intervals by streams of liquid fire, and again by clouds of steamy vapor. So, after I had journeyed fully one hundred thousand miles, I fell to the ground in utter weariness, for my quest appeared to have neither beginning nor ending.

Whilst I lay on the ground in a half stupor, I thought I heard the voice of Jack speaking to me. I could not, however, clearly distinguish his form, because he had now grown past all recognition. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that he seemed to be as big as his own house. However, I made bold to speak to Jack, and to ask him if he still centred all his love upon the one tiny grain of sand located one hundred thousand miles away. He assured me, with tears in his voice, that his undivided affection had not wavered for one moment of time. I then pressed him to explain why he had hung these lamps in such a remote wilderness.

"They shine," said Jack, "that they may give light upon the little spot of earth to which I am so tenderly attached."

But I reflected that at this vast distance those infinitesimal creatures could not possibly discern these lamps, and I ventured to hint as much to Jack. Then the calmness which was the usual characteristic of the man vanished. The voice raged furiously, and for five long mortal hours it could not speak for spluttering. At the expiration of that period the voice of Jack cursed me with a terrible curse.

"Degraded wretch!" said he, "and is thy name also to be added to the Book of Unbelief?"

Not only did the voice of Jack curse me. The hand of Jack struck me, and his is no light hand, as I can testify. The result was that for the space of three moons and a quarter I lay unconscious.

When I came to myself, the voice of Jack once more thundered in my ears.

"Man," he said, "tell me the meaning of the house which I have built."

But I answered that the thing was as dark as midnight to me.

"Then," commanded Jack, "get thee away unto the nearest steeple-house, and unfold the matter to the man thou wilt there find arrayed in black garments. Tell him all, and hold nothing back. Then, if he expound not unto thee the riddle, do thou abjure the man of the steeple-house and all his works. Have thou no dealings with the varlets who babble streams of imbecility, and who seek to delude the credulous into the belief that rivers of wisdom flow from their lips. Do thou shake off the dust from thy feet, and quit his steeple-house for ever. I have said it. Go!"

. . . . . .

Let me offer one parting word of counsel. If ever my readers attend one of Sir Robert Ball's lectures on astronomy, I exhort them not to supplement the celestial feast provided by the man of science with a terrestrial feast of salmon and cucumber. I speak what I do know.

G. DAWSON BAKER.

Chemico-Physical Theories of Life.—V.

MAN can support enormous variations of temperature—say variations of 200 degrees centigrade, or thereby. The regulation of the animal heat whereby the animal adapts itself to its environment depends upon that part of the digestive process which furnishes the combustible material to the machine, and, on the other hand, to the respiration which furnishes the oxygen to maintain the combustion process; and so accelerates, or retards, combustion, and the lung and skin transpiration. Here, of course, radiation, conductivity, and evaporation play a more or less predominant *rôle*, according to circumstances. In proportion as the air is dry its motion favors evaporation. Then the quantity of oxygen absorbed by the blood varies in a ratio inverse to the temperature of the air respired. It is entirely reflex, mechanical, and independent of the number or frequency of respiratory movements which *diminish under the influence of cold*.

All conditions which, like cold, tend to enfeeble the organism in any way tend also to diminish the production of animal heat, and, consequently, to lessen the power of resistance to cold. What becomes of *design* here? Thus, W. Edwards, the naturalist at the Jardin des Plantes, determined the fact that young animals, which produce less heat, resist cold much more feebly than adults. Also, that in cold seasons the effects of cold are more intense upon them. Nor are these effects momentary or transient. They are frequently *enduring, and determine ulterior results*. Thus, the rearers of silkworms remarked that when they placed, for incubation, *under identical circumstances of temperature*, eggs of the Bombyx which had been conserved in an icery, and others which had been placed in a cave of which the temperature was not so low, these latter matured more quickly, even to the extent of four or five days.

Now, the conclusions Edwards drew from his observations were, that after an experience of undue cold, although the body may regain its first degree, by or through the application of heat externally, nevertheless there remains, for a time, a diminution of capacity of heat production; and that the more one is exposed to the repeated action of this cause, provided the intervals are not too long, the *more this diminution of capacity augments*. And why is this thus? Simply because there exists a constant relation betwixt the organic activity and functional activity; and that not alone as regards nutrition, but also as regards the functions of relation; which is as much as to say that the activity of the combustion of the aggregate depends entirely upon the activities of the cellular or atomic constituents. This fact is well worth pondering by the advocates of teleological theory; but it is not isolated, only neither time nor space will permit amplification here. *Ex uno disce omnes*. Of course, a *designed* organism might be expected to react quite differently; or a spirit-governed one. But not only is the "living" thing conditioned by the same laws exactly as the "dead" thing, so-called (and properly so, for distinctive purposes), but the thinking thing likewise. And, just as the naturalist has difficulty in defining exactly where the dead ends and the living begins, so there is difficulty in determining exactly any line of demarcation as betwixt the non-thinking and the thinking.

There is a difference between thinking and conscious thinking, of course; but, even as betwixt the conscious state and the unconscious states of matter, the line of demarcation is extremely narrow. This has been demonstrated for us, beyond all cavil, by those magnetic phenomena which, for distinction, are named "hypnotic."

But consider the mineral, generally reckoned the "ultima thule" of consciousness. It is indisputable that it has, in a sense, consciousness of other matter, and especially of other matter like itself. If it hadn't, it would not discriminate in crystallisation, selecting the right and rejecting the wrong substance, nor would it have the productive capacity of sexually selecting the non-metallics, and, by combining with them, forming new substances. All this process is involved in the magnetic phenomenon of polarity, and takes place, as we say, mechanically. But that fact does not vitiate

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the postulation, and, if it did, it would, almost equally, vitiate the postulation of human consciousness.

Thus, in the last analysis, intelligence, the thinking process, is the accurate automatic action, or selective attraction and repulsion, of the atoms and cells; and this sometimes emerges on the plane of consciousness and sometimes not, according to circumstances of tension and attention.

The infinite complexity of intelligence in all phenomena is apparently a difference in degree, not in kind. It is simply that difference which can be conceived of as inevitable betwixt an atom and its simple mind and a body composed of innumerable atoms and its complex mind. To quote from Redcote Dewar's work, entitled *From Matter to Man:* "The structure of the complex body and the complex mind, of course, introduces infinite and wonderful complexities; but these do not affect the fundamental origin of intelligence. There is the same relation betwixt them as there is betwixt a dictionary and a philosophy; as infinite philosophies may be produced from the dictionary, so infinite intelligences may be evolved from the one alphabet of elementary atoms and their energies."

I homologate these sentences after giving a large proportion of time and thought to the study of the questions both underlying and overlying the subject. It does not appear to me that any theory bearing upon the ether, and its modes of energy, or of conveying energy, can invalidate the rational cogency of these considerations. At present I am not inclined towards any theory attributing to ether-waves the potency of gravitation or magnetic force. But, assuming that such theory eventually came to be accepted by physicists, and stood the tests of scientific analysis from every point of view, then all that would be demanded would be to alter the incidence of the argument from the centre to the circumference; or, in other words, the mind would be forced to recognise the inertia of all "matter," and the source of all its manifold energies as "immanent" in the vibrations of that ether which is omnipresent, and, in the view of such theory, would be omnipotent.

The mind of man, regarded as an opposable integral force, is not impugned, nor its dignity derogated from, by chemico-physical correlation of psycho-physical operations. 'Tis simply regarded as the dynamic focus of brain potentialities, comprised in which are the ideas of individuality, personality, and continuity of consciousness. It is the supreme inflorescence of the evolutionary nisus, the latter again being the necessary outcome of the magnetic constitution of matter. The attribution of spurious powers and bogus attributes to the mind is not calculated to enhance its value; and, of course, chemico-physical theories take no account of them. The mind is denuded of these accretions. One of them is free-will. The acceptance of any chemico-physical theory implies the idea of thought mechanism, and this implies necessary sequence of events in response to the incessant sequence of internal or external environmental stimuli. We cannot will to think in any particular way, however much we may, by habit and custom, believe we can. Let anyone attempt, for instance, to "will" to hear the musical sound "re" when "do" is sounded, or to see green when blue is painted up; it will be found impossible. And just so is it throughout the whole gamut of thought; and the wise man, knowing this, and desiring that his acts shall conform to his wishes, takes care to arrange his whole environment—diet included, of course—so that naturally his acts will emerge as desired. For a full exposure of the universal illusion of free-will the reader may refer to a very learned and exhaustive essay from the pen of Professor Hamon, of the University of Brussels, and published by the University Press, Limited.

ROBERT PARK, M.D.

Humanity.

Whatever any of us may do, whatever attitude we may assume, we are but a portion of collective humanity. How little do we possess, how little *are* we, that we can really call our own—that is purely individual. We draw for our knowledge, not only upon those who came before us, but from those among whom we live. The greatest genius, even, would produce little if he had to depend upon his own natural resources.—*Goethe.*

Correspondence.

BARON ROTHSCHILD'S SAINTS AND GODS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is with diffidence I venture to offer a suggestion to so accomplished a scholar as "Chilperic"; but I think I can give some explanation of the late Baron Rothschild's taste in gods and saints, which he says in his article, "Rothschild and the Saints," he has pondered over, and is unable to offer any satisfactory explanation of. The explanation, I think, is simple. The Baron would buy his curios for their intrinsic value and artistic merit without regard to their purpose; he, therefore, has bought the plate which was fashioned for the party in power in the Netherlands—the Imperial and Spanish Catholic masters of the country. At that period the decoration of furniture, especially of goldsmiths' work, was a mode of occult political propaganda, or of declaring an ostentatious loyalty. This accounts for the frequent occurrence of St. Margaret, who was the patron Saint of Margaret, Governor of the Netherlands, the natural daughter of Charles V. St. George and Hercules were both the patrons of brute force—St. George in its military aspect, and Hercules in its social. Hercules remained a popular god all through the Middle Ages, and is found in Christian art as the "Virtue"—Force. Their occurrence on the plate of the Netherlands under the rule of Charles V. is easily understood. Bacchus is a kind of patron god of Spain even to the present time, and his image on table vessels made for Spaniards, or men desiring to be well with Spanish authorities, is most appropriate; moreover, Bacchus is universally used for the decoration of plate and wine vessels of all kinds throughout Europe. Neptune naturally is the chief god of a country below the level of the sea, and of a people dependent on maritime commerce. That the Virgin Mary comes first is easily explained. She was the most frequently represented in art of all kind throughout Europe, and was even more popular in northern countries than in Italy and Spain.

While, as I have said, St. Margaret, the patron saint of the Governor, would be badge of adherence to the Catholic cause, St. George, the patron of England, would have a Protestant and Republican signification, especially during the War of Independence, when the Dutch naturally looked here for assistance. Venus and Apollo were also party symbols as being the opposites of Diana and Acteau, the favorite gods of the Court of France after the advent of Diana of Poictiers; Venus, as love and fecundity, opposing the slaughteress virgin goddess of death, and Apollo, as the god of the arts, opposing the brutal hunters of the French Court.

If I may suggest to "Chilperic" and to your readers, I should expect to find very interesting political suggestions in the designing of the ornament around these figures, and I imagine, from my knowledge of the art of the period, it will give valuable hints on the real opinions held at the period, which the Inquisition and Protestant bigotry both prevented being written in ordinary characters.

GEORGE PORTER.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF monthly Executive meeting, held at the Society's Offices on Thursday, June 28; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bater, T. Gorniot, S. Hartmann, W. Heaford, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, E. W. Quay, C. Quinton, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, E. Sims, T. Shore, T. J. Thurlow, T. Wilmot, C. Watts, and the Secretary.

The first matter dealt with by the new Executive was the appointment of the Benevolent Fund Committee. Messrs. G. J. Warren, V. Roger, E. Bater, E. W. Quay, and H. J. Stace were unanimously elected.

Messrs. B. Munton and W. Leat were elected on the Finance Committee.

The necessary conditions having been complied with, permission was given for the formation of a Branch at New Tredegar, and eight new members were admitted.

The President presented a draft circular *re* the Twentieth Century Fund, and it was moved by Mr. Gorniot, seconded by Mr. Hartmann, and carried unanimously: "That it be adopted, and at once issued."

The Secretary reported the receipt of an invitation from the International Federation of Freethought Societies to the Congress to be held in Paris in September, 1900.

After some discussion, it was moved by Mr. Hartmann, seconded by Mr. Moss: "That the N. S. S. should be represented at the forthcoming Congress by its President, Mr. G. W. Foote, and Mr. W. Heaford."

Mr. Foote accepted, with the qualification that if business required his presence in London he should be released. Mr. Heaford also accepted, the details being adjourned until the next meeting.

The Secretary reported that the Demonstrations would commence on Sunday, July 8, and the meeting adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A lecture.
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15 and 6.30, R. P. Edwards.
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A lecture.
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, F. A. Davies, "What do we Know about Jesus?"
FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, Freethought Demonstration. Speakers: Messrs. Foote, Watts, Moss, etc.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen; 6.15, Debate between Messrs. Cohen and Bowman on "Has Man a Free Will?"
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; 7.15, A lecture. July 11, at 8.15, W. J. Ramsey.
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, E. Pack.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies. Lectures every Tuesday and Thursday, at 8 p.m., by R. P. Edwards.
KILBURN (corner of Glengal-road): 7.30, R. P. Edwards.
HAMMERSMITH (back of Lyric Theatre): 7.15, F. A. Davies, "The Ethics of Secularism."
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): Closed during the months of June, July, and August.
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (P-ince of Wales' Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Is there a Future Life? A Secularist's Answer." At 11, in the Bull Ring, Mr. Ward. Mr. Ward will also lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8 (weather permitting).
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Arrangements for Annual Picnic.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—July 8, m., Kingsland; a. and e., Victoria Park.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—July 15, m., Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park. 22, Northampton.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—July 8, Birmingham. 15, Debate at Northampton. 22, Birmingham. 29, Manchester. August 19, Nortampton.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—July 8, e., Hammersmith. 15, m., Battersea; e., Stratford. 29, m., Station-road; a., Peckham Rye.

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[*Continued on p. 431. Look There!*]

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THE

Freethinker

Editod by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 28. SUNDAY, JULY 15, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

Curates.

WHY will the worldly-minded man smile when his eyes rest upon this heading, severely simple as it is? And why, if this were a religious journal, would the young lady readers begin to smirk and simper? And why, if I were a speaker at an Additional Curates' Aid Society meeting—instead of a "lost soul," writing in a paper once arraigned for dreadful impiety—should I have to commence with a grave visage and words of deep and solemn import calculated to check at the outset any tendency to tittering or other forms of levity excited by the nature of the subject? Why are curates, in spite of their "sacred calling," usually regarded by men—especially if they are "big brothers" of marriageable girls—with so much ill-concealed contempt; and by paterfamilias with so much dubious condescension, and by maters with such watchful eyes; and by lackeys with such broad grins, and by heavy dignitaries of the Church with such an eternally-searching gaze, which seems to say: "You *may* turn out all right, but at present I'm not at all sure about you"?

Why is the "pale young curate" the object of such a mingling of disdain and surmise, not to say ridicule and suspicion? It is not because humorists and the writers of farcical comedies (who may not always be classed as humorists) have made him the butt of a great deal of harmless satire. The public seem to appreciate that sort of thing—if the curates don't; otherwise they would not be treated to it. The supply has apparently arisen from a demand. Is it that the curates, or at any rate the bulk of them, lend themselves to caricature? No doubt they are god-sends to artists whose aim it is to amuse the community. Yet how dreadful! when all the time these poor young men are thinking of themselves, not as god-sends for comic papers or stage farces, but as God-sent to reclaim the world from its burden of sin and unbelief. Naturally they "don't like London," or rather they don't like a great deal of the fun which is made in the metropolis, as elsewhere, at their expense. And sometimes they are emboldened to resent it. But their defence is usually of the "Bath-bun and glass of milk" description, affording additional mirth to their heartless critics.

All the same, they are entitled to call themselves "Reverend," and write, it may be, "M.A." after their names, though that is becoming year by year a less frequent possibility. The old-time standard of academic attainment has been rapidly lowered of late years in order to take in the constantly-diminishing number of candidates for "holy orders." Not that the parsons ordained under an earlier *régime* are, in the bulk, any the better for their University distinctions. Whatever their Alma Mater may have done for them, they remain, as a class, singularly deficient in real knowledge, and especially in practical common sense. Still, in a social way, the Church is preparing for herself a serious knock-back by the admission of ill-bred, ill-educated novitiates, who may not be tolerated in many circles as their predecessors were with the observation, said or unsaid: "Well, if he is a fool, he is at any rate a gentleman."

Styling himself "Reverend," the young curate naturally has to play up to the prefix. He does so as best he may. Possibly he is a mere babe, without the semblance of a hair on his lip, or an original idea in his head, or two consecutive sentences in his mouth which are not weak platitudes or meaningless scraps of "Holy Writ." Still he is "Reverend," and would be mightily offended if it were suggested that he should postpone the use of the title till time and experience lent some degree of fitness to its application. In the circumstances, is it any wonder that he finds his chief solace and a sustainment of his self-respect in the company of silly and sentimental members of the so-called "weaker sex"? From them he can, at any rate, command a certain amount of sympathetic attention, personal deference, perhaps adulation—not to speak of an unlimited supply of altar decorations worked in precious gold and silk, flowers for festal purposes, and a docile attendance at Early Week-day Communion when the sterner sex are growling at the necessity for commencing another day's struggle with the business of the world.

This is all in regard to curates of a young and impressionable age. Now it seems that the Church is confronted with the problem what to do with her middle-aged or elderly ordained, but unbeneficed, servants. They are beginning to cry out like the poor unemployed who held meetings in Hyde Park not long since with that wail, partly despairing and partly ironical, of "Too Old at Forty!" Evidently the curate at forty is beginning to find that he is hopelessly left—that he is more on the shelf as regards his ecclesiastical prospects in life than maiden ladies of that age are supposed to be in respect to matrimony. Church papers for some time past have been filled with elderly curates' complaints. It might seem mean to cast in these unfortunate men's teeth some of their own professional teachings. Otherwise one might warn them against longing for the loaves and fishes, or for the flesh pots of Egypt, or laboring for the meat which perisheth, etc. Undoubtedly they find it galling to see men of not superior ability, of not more burning zeal, of not greater piety or more irreproachable character or more administrative tact, holding high positions, enjoying large emoluments, and even living in palaces and legislating in the House of Peers; whilst they, their own poor selves, and perhaps their families too, are practically starving. At least, so they put it.

Let us try to console them. In the first place, they and their families are not starving in the sense that hundreds of thousands of households are starving at the present moment in this "merrie England" of ours. They do not have to sell their beds to pay the rent, or pawn their clothes to buy a meal. And if they did—what then? Is not the Gospel they preach intended to be the very apotheosis of poverty? Are they not constantly setting forth Christ and his apostles as exemplars to the world? Christ had not where to lay his head. His disciples were equally poor, and were commanded to remain so when they were sent out to convert the world—which is the same mission these complaining curates are engaged on. What do the preachers of Christ's gospel want with even the "mere necessities" demanded by unregenerate worldlings? Not for them is it to live comfortable lives free from want or care; to provide gold or silver for their purses, to lay up treasures on earth, to take thought for the morrow, or to love the world and the things of the world, or accumulate riches that are deceitful and ought to be distributed to the poor. We have their assurance that they are not envious of the archbishops and bishops and deans and other high dignitaries of the Church. How could we suspect such a thing? They do not covet the handsome stipends ranging from £15,000 to £1,000 a year. Perish the thought! They do not desire to live in princely palaces or bask on the bishops'

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bench. Far from it. But they *do* cast loving eyes at some of the nice fat livings sprinkled about the land. And, therefore, we tremble lest they should forget the seal which the Almighty has set against covetousness and envy, and we are concerned, with a deep and consuming concern, that they should not endanger their eternal safety by base and mercenary desires.

To come to these complaints in the concrete, we learn from one writer, signing himself "A Curate of much Experience," that the fault rests with incumbents. He says:—

> "There is a spirit of jealousy abroad, to a great extent, which should not be; if a curate is a better preacher than the rector, he has to leave. What is quite apparent now is that men who have served thirty or forty years as curates are passed over both by bishops and patrons, and never get any preferment, while young men with no experience whatever are placed in parishes they are not fit for.....Too many of the young incumbents are given to hunting, fishing, and shooting, and all kinds of amusements quite foreign to a minister of the Gospel.....Bishops as well as rectors are forgetful of what they once were themselves—curates—now raised to the bench of bishops and to good livings, and they look down upon curates who hold the same orders as themselves. Bishops make too often rash promises they never intend to fulfil."

On the other hand, we learn, from a letter of the secretary to the Association for Benefiting Aged and Indigent Curates, that the tyrants of the situation are not the incumbents, but the young lady members of the congregations. They will not tolerate the curate of forty-five, but will metaphorically go down on their knees and worship a young curate if he is good looking and has private means. There is a great deal of human nature in this, and it shows itself whether the "grave and reverend seigniors" of the Church, with their hard, dry theology and ecclesiastical polity, like it or not. We do not see the possibility of preventing curates from growing old, and so passing the point of fascination for young lady church-goers; but still we cannot help agreeing with a Nonconformist journal which says: "It speaks ill, terribly ill, for a religious institution when a large proportion of its teaching faculty find their position defined for them, not by their education, their character, or their general fitness, but by the sentimental preferences of a number of love-sick girls."

FRANCIS NEALE.

Grant Allen.—II.

GRANT ALLEN'S head, not his heart, went wrong over this marriage question. Laws would hardly be necessary if all were wise and virtuous, but such a state of society is, to say the least of it, very remote from the present. Men and women have to be protected, not only from each other, but from themselves; and liberty itself would soon disappear in a universal licence of passion and conduct. Considering the average development of human nature, Grant Allen's proposal was one rather of destruction than of improvement. It resembled a proposal to cut off the head to cure the toothache. Not only did it, as Mr. Clodd points out, overlook the enormous complexity of the problem; not only did it show an astonishing ignorance of human nature, and of the everlasting economical difference between fatherhood and motherhood; but it displayed an amazing absence of mind on the part of a convinced and accomplished evolutionist, who was perfectly aware of the small, slow, and prolonged changes by which Nature achieves the progress of a species. Instead of suggesting the next practical step on the path of reform, he proposed a total revolution; and one for which the *élite* of our race, to say nothing of the multitude, are by no means prepared. "The effectiveness of his scheme," Mr. Clodd says, "must always be limited to the narrow zone where lofty conceptions of sex relations and of mutual obligation prevail." Yes, where they *prevail;* not where they merely *obtain*. And it may be doubted whether they prevail among the talking and writing classes any more than they do among the rest of the community. Indulgence in fine sentiments, expressed in beautiful language, is easy enough to persons of a certain temperament; but the discipline of actual life is generally a more difficult matter. One thing, however, should be noted in this connection. Some social philosophers, like John Stuart Mill, for instance, with a preponderance of intellect and a lack of animality, are occasionally betrayed into ludicrous futility in dealing with sexual questions. They understand affection, but they do not understand passion; in particular, they have no intimate idea of the explosive force of the sexual passion in commoner organisms. And where their knowledge is at fault, their criticisms and suggestions are of very little utility. Sometimes, indeed, they are of less than no utility; being positively harmful in the actual circumstances.

Yes, it was Grant Allen's head, not his heart, that went wrong. He loved his wife devotedly, and was under no temptation to vagrant attachments—which, by a prostitution of the French word for love, are usually called *amours*. He even dedicated the *Woman Who Did* to his wife, in memory of his "twenty happiest years." And thereby hangs a joke. An evening newspaper printed an interview with Grant Allen when his "Evangel" was being talked about, ending with the words, "He is happily married;" and the printers made it read, "He is, happily, married." The punctuation looks deliberate rather than accidental. Perhaps the compositor, or the reader, was a bit of a wag; and for once, at any rate, his wit was happy, and proved him to be something of a philosopher.

Grant Allen's character seems to have been a fine one, as far as it went. "You know," Mr. George Meredith wrote to Mr. Clodd, "how highly I prized Grant Allen's literary work, and the warmth of my feeling for him personally." This is the tribute of one who should be a consummate judge of character. Nevertheless, there appears to have been a certain lack of *weight* in Allen. This impression is corroborated to us by his portrait. Perhaps the deficiency was due to his want of physical stamina. Constitution and temperament explain so many things! Allen was an Agnostic—or rather, as Mr. Clodd suggests, a positive Atheist. Yet he declined to write for definitely heretical publications, or to take part in any deliberate propaganda. "Advanced thought," he said, "only loses by isolation." "Slow half-hints," he added, "in the acknowledged organs of thought do far more good in the end. I have never believed in fighting; I believe in permeation." No doubt he was honest in assigning these reasons. But was he not, after all, only voicing the law of his own idiosyncrasy? And is not Mr. Clodd only voicing the impulse of personal friendship when he backs up Allen by saying that he had learnt "the barrenness of controversy," and that "delusions and errors do not perish by debate," but "under the slow and steady operation of changes to which they are unable to adapt themselves"? There is truth in these propositions; but it is only a partial truth; and, such as it is, Allen himself forgot it in the *Woman Who Did*—that is to say, when he was intensely in earnest. Mr. Clodd, too, is soon impelled to advance qualifications and reservations. Only a couple of pages further on, he sneers at these "acknowledged organs of thought" as timid trucklers, affording the smallest of chances even to the least aggressive of advanced publicists. "As if," Mr. Clodd exclams, "any reform was ever instituted, or abuse swept away, without wounding some ignorant or bigoted person's susceptibilities!"

The sane philosophy in this matter is to let every soldier of progress do what he can, following the law of his own temperament, and recognising the same right and duty on the part of others. It is folly for one temperament to quarrel with another for being different. The bolder are somewhat apt to despise the less bold as cowardly, but that is usually a mistake. On the other hand, the less bold are still more apt to sneer at the bolder as vulgar and froward, which is usually a greater mistake.

Let us now turn to Grant Allen's latest important work—in a sense, the work of his lifetime. For twenty years he gathered material for his intended *magnum opus*—an "Inquiry into the Origins of Religions." For ten years he was engaged in writing the first instalment of this work, which he published in 1897 under the title of *The Evolution of the Idea of God*. This title was suggested to him by Mr. Herbert Spencer. Allen had meant to call it "The Evolution of God." But he was dissuaded from doing so by his philosophical Master.

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"It will be a fatal step," Mr. Spencer wrote to him. "....The expression is sufficient to shock not only the orthodox, but no end of people who are extremely liberal in their theology, and you would tend by using it still further to diminish your public." Mr. Spencer also pointed out that Allen's title was illogical. "You do not believe in God's reality," he said, "and, therefore, propose to trace the evolution of a thing which, according to you, does not exist." Of course, there is a great deal of force in *this* objection, but one is tempted to ask whether it would have been urged against a book on (say) "The Evolution of Witchcraft," in which Allen no more believed than he did in God.

Seven hundred and fifty copies of Allen's big book were sold in a few weeks; and, as the price was twenty shillings net, the result was fairly good business. "I congratulate you," Mr. Spencer wrote to him, "on its achievement. I had no idea you had been devoting such an immensity of labor and research to the subject. The bringing together of the evidence in a coherent form and showing its bearing on the current creed can scarcely fail to have a great effect." The book did not, however, as Mr. Clodd says, evoke the discussion which Allen expected. This may have been partly due to the cause which Mr. Clodd assigns; namely, public indifference to the discussion of serious subjects. But as the book had an excellent sale a supplementary reason must be looked for. We venture to suggest that the book would have excited greater interest if it had been published ten years earlier. When it *was* published it was no longer anything like a bombshell.

Grant Allen's masterpiece was reviewed in the *Freethinker* at the time of its publication by the late J. M. Wheeler, and some correspondence passed subsequently between the author and the reviewer, both sides of which are probably lost. Allen thanked his critic for some useful suggestions, which he said he intended to make use of in the next edition of his book.

There is a very interesting letter in this Memoir from Mr. J. G. Frazer, the author of that remarkable and extremely able work entitled *The Golden Bough*—with whom also, by the way, Mr. Wheeler had some correspondence. Mr. Frazer admitted that ancestor worship, or the fear of ghosts, had been "on the whole the most important factor in the evolution of religious belief." But he attached more importance than Allen did to Animism—the subject of Dr. Tylor's magnificent treatise. "Primitive man, it seems to me," he wrote, "instinctively attributes conscious life to all or most inanimate objects, quite apart from any idea that the ghosts of his ancestors are about, and may be in those objects." The same view was held by Darwin, and harmonises with what we know of the mental condition of very young children, and even that of some of the lower animals. A dog barking at an object moved by the wind, or at clouds passing over the moon, shows a state of mind that primitive man must have advanced through to the subtler conception of ghosts. Besides, it seems clear that man must have formed the idea of a soul within himself before he could have conceived the idea of disembodied souls in his surroundings.

Allen himself did not believe in the soul or a future life. He was once drowned, in the sense that he had lost consciousness, and would have known no more if he had not been rescued. There was "a fierce wild struggle" and "a horrible choking sensation," and then "all was over." It was not so bad as breaking your arm or having your tooth drawn. The actual dying was "quite painless—as painless as falling asleep." For this reason, if for no other, he had no fear of death, which he said should have "absolutely no terrors for a sensible person." Mr. Clodd holds that Allen's "absence of belief in a future life" was "the logical outcome, not so much of denial, as of what would seem congenital incapacity to conceive that there could be such a thing as the supernatural." But does not this theory betray some confusion? There are Spiritualists, for instance, who do not believe in God, and repudiate all forms of supernaturalism; yet they believe in the soul and in a future life, on what they regard as grounds of natural evidence, which many of them think amounts to a positive demonstration.

"I am not, and never was, an Agnostic," Allen once wrote to the London *Echo*. He was not an Agnostic because he was more than an Agnostic. The Agnostic says, "I don't know." Allen, on the contrary, said "There is nothing to be known." Such is the testimony of his most intimate friend, and he may therefore be classed with the positive Atheists.

Mr. Clodd will pardon us for reminding him, at this point, that the "taunt" that "the best excuse for God is that he does not exist," was not uttered in view of the world's gross and often revolting conceptions of deity. The author of that "taunt" was Henry Beyle (De Stendhal), and he said it in view of the facts of nature, life, and history; his meaning being that, as this world goes, its alleged moral governor is simply inexcusable. We do not suppose for a moment that Mr. Clodd is anxious not to ruffle the feelings of "pure Theists," as they are sometimes called; just as though the constant cruelties of nature were not far worse than the spasmodic cruelties of men! On the very same page Mr. Clodd rebukes Mr. Andrew Lang for saying that, in a certain crisis, Allen "acted like a Christian." This is one of those impertinences which Christians mistake for flattery. "All noble acts," Mr. Clodd observes, "lie outside the creeds; and the assumption that the impulse to these acts is a monopoly of Christianity has no warrant either in past or present history."

If space permitted, we could make some interesting gleanings from this little volume. A few must suffice. There is a characteristic letter from Huxley, in which Jack Falstaff is truly and honestly called "a great philosopher." There is a monumental letter from a reader who had noticed Allen's statement in a novel that "Browning was splendid for the nerves," and wanted to know the address where he could obtain "the thing." There is a rather ridiculous reference to Comte, showing that Allen did not appreciate the real greatness of that thinker. Lastly, there is a letter from Mr. Herbert Spencer, written in a pessimistic mood, declaring that "we are in course of rebarbarisation," and asserting that "there is no prospect but that of military despotisms, which we are rapidly approaching." Much as we admire and respect Mr. Spencer, we hope he is a false prophet on this occasion. We trust that Mr. Spencer himself has not lived and taught in vain, and that the bright, strenuous existence of Grant Allen has not been wasted upon the modern world. After all, it is possible for the wisest men to be mistaken; and prophecy is always the riskiest of intellectual exercise. G. W. FOOTE.

Christ and our Social System.

THE social condition of the people who exist in what is termed "Christian England" is still engaging the attention, not only of the secular reformer, but also of the religious thinker. The evils which for ages have dominated society are recognised in all their terrible magnitude, and various are the remedies which are constantly being put forward for the purpose of removing the wrongs that have so long retarded the attainment of individual happiness and national progress. The social unrest that was indicated in the Republic of Plato, the Utopia of Sir Thomas More, and the Phalanstère of Fourier, is becoming more and more manifest in our midst. Francis Bacon was not far wrong when he wrote that "the great multiplication of virtues upon human nature resteth upon societies well ordained and disciplined." Such ordaining and disciplining cannot possibly be more effectually secured than by carefully considering, with a view to their correction, the evils of the past and the shortcomings of the present, so that fair prospects may reasonably be entertained of a better and happier future.

It is too true that many of our institutions, having emanated from laws based upon ignorance of the real requirements of human nature, have been the means of keeping people imbecile in mind and wretchedly poor in body. These institutions and laws still keep many persons in idleness and compel them to be a dead-weight upon industry, and also to perpetuate pauperism, foster bad habits, and encourage crime. The great ethical science is ignored, and, while the primary causes of physical diseases are lost sight of or neglected, millions of money and much valuable time are wasted

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in every generation in futile endeavors to effect a partial cure of the diseases thus engendered. The present state of society is something worse than artificial; it is opposed to the welfare of mankind, it causes degradation, injustice, and cruelty. That a change for the better will take place is the hope of every well-wisher to his kind. The question of the hour is: What can be done to radically reform our social system? Its deplorable condition is generally admitted, but the problem remains: What is the remedy?

Amongst the many attempts to answer this question is one made by the editor of the *Church Gazette*, in its issue of June 30, in a leading article, headed "Christianity and the Social System." Like most proposed remedies emanating from Christian sources, the editor's effort is marred by an unjustifiable, slavish adherence to a professed belief in Christ as the fountain of all genuine social reforms. It is, in my opinion, this absurd adoration of Jesus that has tended in a large degree to perpetuate the very evils that every social reformer should desire to remove. The editor justly says:—

> "What these evils consist of is already known to everyone sufficiently well to require mere indication. There is the contrast between accumulating wealth and corresponding luxury, and increased poverty and sweating. There is the dull monotony of the conditions of labor, and the rapidly-growing curse of overcrowding. Along with all this there are the attendant evils of drink and immorality, which are more often the effects than the causes of the conditions which induce and often almost compel them; and there is the outlook which has to be faced on behalf of the rising generation, which is being brought up amidst these ghastly surroundings. .....But along with all this it is no less a fact that the concomitant evils just pointed to—those of poverty, preventible suffering, vice, and class separation—these are not on the decrease, but on the increase, and that they prevail at this moment probably much more widely in this country than has ever before been the case."

The question, however, arises: Why do the evils here named still exist? The answer is: Because the remedies that have hitherto been applied have been found inadequate to successfully grapple with the evils that crowd our social system. The great mistake has been made in relying too much upon Christ to do what evidently he was incapable of accomplishing. In no sense was he a real social reformer; and, according to the New Testament, he never propounded any principles by which the evils we deplore could be either prevented or removed. Even the Rev. Lyman Abbott, who is an enthusiastic admirer of Jesus, admits, in his *Christianity and Social Problems*, that—

> "Christ made almost no attempt to change the social order or the social organism. The system of taxation which prevailed in the Roman Empire was abominably unjust. Christ said never a word about taxation. Labor was not only underpaid and ill-paid, but, for the most part, worked with its hands in manacles; but Christ said never a word about slavery. If drinking and drunkenness were not as bad in their forms then as they are now, by reason of the modern use of distilled liquors, then comparatively unknown, drinking habits and animalism, in all its forms, were worse in Greece than they have ever been in America; but Christ never levelled his shafts against the liquor trade or the making of wine" (p. 130).

The fact is, Christ not only abstained from denouncing many of the prominent evils and vices of his time, but many of his alleged teachings would, if they were acted upon, tend to augment them. If this be doubted, the reader is advised to carefully study the following passages in the New Testament:—Matthew v. 5, 39, 40, 41, 42; vi. 19, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34; xix. 21; Luke vi. 20, 24; John vi. 27. Now, it would be very interesting to note any attempt to practically apply the teachings contained in the above passages to our present social conditions. If such an attempt were made, Peter's words would be applicable to the victims of such Christian fanaticism when he said: "The latter end is worse with them than the beginning." Many of the sayings attributed to Christ may suit ideal conditions, but they are useless for real ones. No doubt they served their purpose in days of ignorance, non-self-reliance, and asceticism; but in this age, when knowledge, personal effort, and co-operative enterprise predominate, such sayings have no practical value.

The editor of the *Church Gazette* appears to be quite alive to our present imperfect social conditions, but the remedy which he suggests would be, in my estimation, as bad, if not worse, than the disease. Hence, in reply to the question, What remains to be done? the editor says:—

> "To our thinking, the answer is that he [man] must follow the footsteps of his Master. He accepted the Roman yoke, though who can doubt that He saw all the iniquities of Cæsarism? Yet he submitted to the survival of these iniquities, while all the while He laid down a set of principles which, in the fulness of time, were destined to supplant Cæsarism."

Here we have a fair specimen of the fanaticism of fetish worship which at the present time is so prevalent amongst those who are termed "advanced Christians." In their own minds they form an ideal character, which they ascribe to the founder of Christianity; while they entirely ignore his real character as set forth in the Four Gospels. Why is this? Is it because they cannot any longer defend the real Jesus of the New Testament, and yet lack courage to say so? In religious circles it is fashionable to bow to the name of Jesus, while the very persons who do so dare not attempt to either emulate his conduct or obey his teachings. The truth is, the Church is honeycombed with hypocrisy. The writer of this article experienced recently a striking illustration of this. After a lecture he gave at West Ham, the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale offered some opposition, and extolled to the highest the character and teachings of Christ. No doubt what he said would pass current in his pulpit or in a Sunday school, but in a debate it proves "sound and fury, signifying nothing." I told the rev. gentleman as much, and offered to publicly discuss with him the character and teachings of Christ. Up to the present time he has not accepted my offer, and I do not expect he ever will. Mr. Woffendale is not backward in saying what he can do, but he is exceedingly reticent in trying to do it. Two of his misled followers have written asking me why I do not meet their champion in discussion. My answer is, because he is not willing to debate. If he is, I am ready to affirm "that the character and teachings of Christ are defective and impracticable." Now let the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale accept my invitation, or for ever hold his peace.

To return to the remedy the editor of the *Church Gazette* gives for social evils. He says man must follow the footsteps of Jesus. But this is just what no man can do; and no one but a lunatic or a criminal would try. Let the editor attempt to practise the injunctions set forth in the passages from the New Testament referred to above. He says Christ accepted the Roman yoke and submitted to the iniquities of Cæsarism. This, however, is what he should not have done. As a social reformer, he should have endeavored to break the yoke and to destroy the iniquities. To remain inactive in the midst of oppression and wrong is to evince either cowardice or inability—two failings which would deprive the possessor of the right to be regarded as a social reformer. The editor says Christ "laid down a set of principles which, in the fulness of time, were destined to supplant Cæsarism." Where are those principles? Let them be produced, and I will endeavor to deal with them. But why delay the application of good principles? If they are capable of improving society, the sooner they are applied the better for one and all. Besides, to propound principles is not enough for regenerating purposes. What is required is the knowledge how to properly apply them to societarian conditions, and this knowledge Christ has not supplied; therefore the amelioration of our social status must come from other sources than Christ or his teachings.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Clergy and Debate.

FOR nearly three months a discussion, initiated by the energetic secretary of the Newcastle Branch of the N. S. S., has been running through the columns of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* on the subject of "Why won't parsons debate?" The Secular side has been ably championed by a number of the members of the Newcastle Society, although it has been more than they could do to get a straightforward answer to their simple query. Both parties have expressed much surprise—one

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that the clergy should not be more ready to discuss the claims of their religion, the other that these gentlemen should be expected to stand on the same platform with those whose avowed object is the destruction of their faith.

It may be granted, at the outset, that there is considerable justification for the surprise of both parties. From the Secular side it would seem that the best men to champion the claims of Christianity are those who are professionally trained as its exponents, and who, for the most part, profess to be "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost" to the work. The layman who tackles a Secular lecturer generally labors under certain strong disadvantages. He has probably never made the subject a special study, he is usually unaccustomed to the public platform, and the conditions of warfare are never, as a result, quite equal. All these disadvantages are obviated in the case of the clergy. They have had the training, and, presumably, the study; and, in seeking to draw the clergy into a discussion of the value of Christianity, the Secularist is seeking to abolish all removable inequalities, and to place the opponents on an equal footing.

On the other hand, the Christian asks the Secularist the counter query: Why should the parson debate? And this, again, is a question that need surprise no one who knows the history and tendencies of the clergy. The parson is in possession, his interests are protected by law, his teachings are sanctified by custom, and thus lifted beyond the level of ordinary criticism. In any discussion he stands to lose all and gain nothing. The utmost he can hope to do is to remain as he was and keep the number of his followers intact. Experience has taught him, however, that in matters of debate even this much is seldom accomplished. The number of those who have had their faith shaken as the result of listening to discussions between Christians and Freethinkers might be counted by hundreds. In every discussion the Secularist is doing more than merely breaking down the arguments of the disputant on the other side of the table; he is at the same time breaking down the religious convictions of many of his hearers and introducing heretical ideas for the first time to many others. Let us be fair, even to the clergy, and let us admit that the principal reason for the clergy declining discussion is that they lose in position, in influence, in the number of their adherents, by nearly every debate in which they engage. The sensible ones are beginning to see this; and, as a result, the clerical opponents one meets are roughly divisible into two classes—one seeking self-aggrandisement as the result of their platform advertising, the other too stupid to see the strength of the enemy's position or to realise the weakness of their own. There is only one cause that *might* be expected to induce the clergy to engage in discussion, and that is the love of truth; but it would be shutting our eyes to all that is known of the history of clericalism to expect that to rank as a very powerful motive. The clergy have never regarded it as part of their function to assist in the discovery of truth or in the enlargement of knowledge. Every priesthood on the face of the earth has been substantially the same in this respect—animated by the same motives, striving for the same ends, and seeking to realise them by the same means. They have always regarded themselves as the repositories and defenders of old ideas rather than the discoverers and elaborators of new ones. Their advice to the young men and women committed to their care is never, Read, search, study all that comes in your way; but always, Don't read this, don't study that, don't search there—it will disturb your faith and shatter your beliefs. As though a belief that needed to be sheltered from every breath of criticism was one worthy of any serious right-minded man or woman.

The successive revision and modification of ideas in the light of new knowledge is alien to the clerical mind, and absolutely fatal to its pretensions. Advanced opinions have probably less influence over the clergy than over any class of the community. If ever the parson is found in the ranks of reformers, it is not usually that he is attracted there by any love of reform, but simply because the competition of sects has forced him into a momentary alliance with the enemies of his order. Generally, however, he believes, with Lamb, that "Next to making a child an infidel is the letting him know that there are infidels at all," and hopes, by pursuing an ostrich-like policy and treating the world as though unbelief formed no appreciable portion of its intellectual furniture, to keep his flock firm to the faith of their fathers.

In shirking discussion, the clergy are only demonstrating that the experience of the past thirty or forty years has not been quite wasted. Forty years since the clergy were ready enough to debate. Aggressive Atheism was then a comparatively new thing so far as the mass of the people were concerned, and it was imagined that its unsoundness might be easily demonstrated. And so they came, they fought, and went away resolved never to fight again. The dullest began to recognise that beliefs which were listened to with the utmost gravity when propounded from a pulpit sent an audience into fits of laughter when preached from an open platform. Wild, random, and misleading statements that might be made with the utmost impunity in church or chapel, where no talking back is allowed, became a much more serious matter when there stood, a few feet away, someone ready and able to expose the true nature of such assertions. In what debate would a man like the Rev. Mr. Horton have ventured to tell a deliberate falsehood concerning the religious opinions of Mill, Dr. Clifford to have ranked Darwin as a "typical Christian leader," or Dean Farrar to give four references, for a statement concerning the character of Roman women, three of which had absolutely no existence outside his own heated imagination? There can be no question that the clergyman who understands his own position thoroughly learns to distrust open discussion, and with reason.

For the profession of a clergyman does not, for the most part, represent a belief that has been adopted as the result of mature conviction, and which is to be defended with all the energy in one's possession. It is simply a trade, generally selected by a man's parents, and often because their son is not sharp enough or intelligent enough for anything else. It is a trade adopted much as a man adopts the law, medicine, commerce, or literature, only with greater promise for mediocrity that is held out by any of these other branches. Under these conditions, one can hardly expect a band of commercial travellers—and the clergy are this to a considerable extent—to indulge in any course of conduct that would tend to fix their customer's attention on the unserviceable quality of the goods in which they deal.

And then, finally, a very powerful cause of the present attitude of the clergy towards discussion is the fact that intellectual forces appeal to them in a constantly decreasing ratio. At a much earlier period of our national history the Church did, in virtue of its wealth and national prestige, succeed in enlisting in its service some of the best intellect of the day. Christianity did not then present the glaring social and intellectual anomaly it has since become. Men of real intellectual power might enlist themselves in its service, and the inherent absurdity of the faith was obscured to the eyes of the world by the wit and wisdom of those who stood forward as its champions. But with each step of national development the Church found its intellectual grip of the people slipping away. Not only were fresh difficulties in the way of accepting Christianity created by the different lines of development in science, literature, and political life, but fresh channels of employment were opened, and the Churches found successful competitors in the growing intellectual life of the nation. True, the Churches could, and do now for the matter of that, still *purchase* champions, but these were necessarily of a decreasing order of intelligence. It is now a common complaint at each of our universities that young men of promise will not take divinity studies. They prefer the wider and more intellectually honest career opened by science or literature, and the outside world shows its approval of their decision by the decreasing respect shown to the clerical profession.

No, when all things are considered, it is not surprising that the clergy shun discussion. A willingness to debate must at least argue one of two things. In its higher aspect it assumes the possession of beliefs that will stand the most careful and rigorous examination, and that people can be convinced of their truth; on lower grounds, it assumes a capability of so imposing

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upon an audience that it will mistake declamation for argument and assertion for proof. That fundamental Christian beliefs will *not* stand careful examination is becoming more evident with each generation. And the democratisation of knowledge renders the last course increasingly risky. The old appeals to passion, to ignorance, to interest, are still made, but with questionable success. Unbelief is no longer a *rara avis*; it is broadcast, it is present among high and low, educated and uneducated. The clergy, in spite of their silence, know this, and wisely prefer silence to speech, hoping by a policy of silence to defer the fate that sooner or later overtakes all shams. C. COHEN.

That Pippin.

CHRISTIANITY is based upon the story of the Fall. In Adam all sinned, as in Christ all must be saved. To this doctrine St. Paul gives his sanction, and they may be disregarded who, without any claim to inspiration, endeavor to explain the narrative as an allegory. If Adam did not really fall, he could not have been cursed for falling, and his posterity could neither have partaken in a sin which was never committed nor in a malediction which was never pronounced. Original sin is a false doctrine if our first parents did not transmit the germs of iniquity. If Adam did not fall, there was no need for Christ to save us; if he did not set God and man at variance, there was no necessity for an atonement; and so the Christian scheme would be a *fiasco* from beginning to end. This will never do. No Garden of Eden, no Gethsemane! No Fall, no Redemption! No Adam, no Christ!

Mother Eve's curiosity was the cause of the first sin. The whole human race was made liable to damnation through her partiality for fruit. Millions of souls now writhe in hell because she took a bite of an apple.

This forbidden apple, which "brought death into the world and all our woe," grew on the Tree of Knowledge, which God planted in the midst of the Garden of Eden, sternly ordering Adam and Eve not to eat of it on pain of death. They might eat of the fruit of every other tree but this one. "See," said Jehovah, "what lovely pippins! Scarlet and dark gold on the sunny side, and on the shady side as soft and mellow as the amber tints of an autumn sunset. But don't touch them. They are my special preserve. If I find a single one missing, you'll wish you were never born."

Now the Lord must have been very simple to protect his pippins in this way. It was the height of absurdity to tell a woman she might do everything but one, without expecting her to do it. Naturally she thought of nothing else. Had the Lord said nothing about the apples, or told her she *must* eat them, they might have been hanging on the tree to this very day.

But not only did the Lord allow Eve's curiosity to prompt her to "sin," he permitted the serpent "more subtil than any beast of the field" to egg her on. This wily creature is supposed to have been animated, on this occasion, by the Devil, although the text does not allude to such a circumstance. If it *was* the Devil, masquerading as a snake, what chance had the poor woman against his seductive wiles?

One day Adam went fishing or something, and Eve went off to look at the pippins. At the foot of the tree, or somewhere handy, she saw "the old serpent," who saluted her with great civility. "Good day, ma'am," said he; and, instead of running away from the talking snake, the lady joined in the conversation, and business began. Old Nick observed that the pippins looked lovely. She assented, but said she was afraid to touch them. "If I do," she said, "I shall die." "Who told you so?" asked Satan. "Why HE," replied Mrs. Eve. "*What* HE?" "Oh, the gentleman who made us." "Die!" laughed Old Nick; "tut, tut, ma'am, look at me; I've eaten bushels." Thereupon he plucked off one with his tail, for want of hands, and held it out to her. The temptation was irresistible. Poor Eve took it, put her front teeth into it, found it nice, went off to find Adam, and they sat down together to apple luncheon.

Immediately she took the fruit, according to Milton, who is a kind of supplementary Bible to English Protestants—

> Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,
> Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
> That all was lost.

What a rumpus about a trifle! It reminds us of the Jew who had a sneaking love for pork. One day he went into a restaurant and ordered sausages. As he was taking the first mouthful there was a loud clap of thunder. This was followed by another clap as he tried again, and that by a third. At last he threw down the knife and fork and made for the door, exclaiming, "What a frightful fuss about a bit of pork."

—*From "Bible Romances" (Eve and the Apple)*, by G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

ABOUT two years ago the Missionary and Bible Societies of England and America presented the Empress of China with a magnificently printed and decorated copy of "Holy Scripture." It was accepted very blandly, and the astute old lady promised to give it her best attention. We suppose the massacre of the Christian missionaries is the result.

A writer in the *Church Gazette* asks: "Is it not time that we began to seriously consider whether it is worth while to send missions to India and China?" He speaks from experience he has had in India, where he says the missionaries "expound Christianity in such a crude manner that the natives, who are very subtle of argument, at once perceive the utter childishness of it all."

The *People*, in its last issue, publishes some outspoken notes on Christian missions. The writer—one of its regular contributors—says that, if he had his way, he would not readily permit missionaries either in China or India. Assuredly he would not allow women to accompany them. "Where nations have a religion of their own that was ancient when we were savages, they might be left to practise it without interference except when it indulges in *suttee* and other barbarities. Ancient peoples, such as the Chinese, the Japanese, the Hindoo, and the Mohammedan, might well be left to their own ethical resources. If you read between the lines of the recent speech by Lord Salisbury, you will be inclined to think that this opinion is his also."

"The worst of it is," continues the *People* contributor, "the Christianised Mongolian and woman, and their children, whenever there is a rising against the missionaries, become victims of the rebel. In the first place, the missionary loses his life, his women are brutally martyred, then their converts are massacred, and presently, when the Great Powers appear upon the scene, a holocaust is made of the fanatics who have killed the Christians: so that too often the result of the missioning is a vast deal of misery and murder.....To practically neglect the heathen at home, the poor and wretched of our own race, the children of the gutter, and the aged pauper, while we pour our wealth into the lap of China, sowing, as we think, good seed only to reap tares, must strike calm, sensible people as a very questionable good, not to say a grave neglect of our own people."

We send out Christian missions which involve us in all sorts of foreign embroilments. But the poor at home may die in blessed ignorance of the Gospel unless parsons can get paid for preaching it. Here are the inmates of the Bangor Workhouse in a state of "spiritual destitution" from this cause. The Vicar of Bangor, who did conduct some voluntary services for a time, declines to continue them. All the other clergymen in the Union have been invited, but refuse to take the work on. They want a stipend. Meanwhile it is not at all certain that the inmates require their services. One would really like to take a vote amongst them, male and female, whether they would have the parson or a special allowance of tobacco and tea.

It isn't safe to leave much to Providence. There's no knowing what he may or may not do. An old minister, who was visiting his hearers, accosted a humble farmer who had been slow with his crops in the harvest season. "I hear, Jamie," said the minister, "that ye are behind with your harvest?" "Oh, sir," was the reply, "I hae got it all in except three wee stacks, and I leave them to the mercy of Providence!"

Talking about "Providence," a funny thing happened the other day at a Private Bill Committee of the House of Commons. The proceedings were interrupted by a crashing peal of thunder, and the Chairman cried: "Order, order." There was no repetition of the disturbance.

Pierre Loti, the famous French writer, contributes to the Paris *Figaro* a long account of how the famine shows itself at Jeypore. "They are parched up and fleshless," he says of a huddled crowd, "the merest skin and bone. They must be mummies. But no, they have life. Their eyelids move, and, seeing strangers, they look at them and try to rise. There are even two or three who stand up on long bands that can hardly be called legs." Here is another frightful picture: "A young woman with a child on her parched breast goes up to a merchant who is eating, and asks for a mouthful. He refuses, and she howls like a famished she-wolf.

And what is the cause of all this awful misery? "Two rainy seasons have passed," Pierre Loti says, "without bringing a cloud. The meadows are without a sign of herbage, the trees without a leaf. Whole territories look like the desert." Good old "Providence."

Rev. Albert James Gunner, curate of Holy Trinity, Woodford, got drunk, perhaps in order to "remember his misery

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no more," according to Bible directions. He also went to Liverpool-street Station and tried to kiss Miss Dudley Mumford, who resented his pious and inebriate attentions. The reverend reveller was subsequently fined £5 and costs by a callous magistrate, who was unable to make proper allowance for the motions of the spirit.

Spurgeon's Tabernacle is to be opened after rebuilding free of debt. The sum of £3,500 was acquired to complete the payment of the big bill, and Pastor Thomas Spurgeon—a true chip of the old block in some things—set apart a day on which he sat personally at the receipt at custom. The faithful brought in their offerings, ranging from £250 down to 3½d., the last sum being contributed by a tiny child in farthings. A poor working woman who had just lost her husband gave sixpence. Pastor Thomas Spurgeon took it.

Henry Mew, confectioner, 74 Abbotsford-street, Nottingham, according to his own statement, is maker of "the noted home-made butterscotch." He is also pious. One of his paper shop-bags lies before us, and there is printed on it a set of "Rules for Daily Life." The first is "Never neglect your prayers." The twelfth and last is "Ask God to help you, for Christ's sake." We suggest a thirteenth, to make up the baker's dozen: "Eat our butterscotch." But perhaps that would be too satirical right on the heels of the twelfth.

The Christian Endeavorers, lots of whom have come over from America, are booming their monster gathering at Alexandra Park in the best Trans-Atlantic style. They draw attention to the fact that "the Palace itself cost £350,000 to build," that "the central transept will accommodate a meeting of upwards of 10,000 persons," that one of the American tents will seat 9,000 persons, and that "the Palace caterer will have on the spot a plant worth about £10,000." Evidently there is to be nothing miraculous in the victualling department. No multiplication of loaves and fishes, no changing of water into wine. Meat and drink are to be provided as though it were a vulgar beanfeast. "Give us this day our daily bread" will be uttered with the consciousness that the caterer has seen to it beforehand.

The word "Melchizedek" excels in force "every damn that ever was made." So says Silas Dowson, a converted old rogue, in one of Mr. Orme Angus's new volumes of stories entitled *Jan Oxber*. This bears out our statement that the Bible may be regarded as the swearer's manual.

M. Lasies, the French deputy who ran amuck in the Chamber the other day, would not gain a prize in a beauty show. The Paris correspondent of the *Daily News* describes him as "a small, dark-haired, wiry, fiery Frenchman belonging to the class of priest-ridden, credulous, and fanatical Frenchmen, as ignorant of the foreign world as a Chinese boy, and as full of national importance."

H. Franklin Bouillon, writing from Paris to the *Morning Leader*, gives an account of "Clericalism in France." He points out that the Clerical party, in seeking to overthrow the Republic, turned their attention to the public schools, and especially to the schools in which the children of the middle classes are educated. By this means they have captured the "classes," if not the "masses." Their pupils, in the army, the navy, and elsewhere, hate the Republican *régime*. France is divided into two distinct nations, one serving Republican ideas, and the other serving clerical reaction. "The Republicans," this writer says, "seem to have realised at last that the continuance of this state of things would spell the doom of the Republic." They will have to enter upon a new anti-clerical campaign if the Republic is to be saved.

We drew attention last week to the latest dodge of the Chapel party at Birmingham to prevent the Church party from getting control of the Board schools. Instead of allowing the old plan to continue of religious instruction being given on the voluntary system, they propose that it shall be given by the teachers; and, according to the *Daily Argus*, the "authorised religious curriculum would be of such a nature as to reconcile the views at any rate of all types of Protestant belief, from High Anglicanism to Unitarianism." But what about non-Protestants? What about Freethinkers, Secularists, Atheists, and Agnostics? What about Jews? What about Roman Catholics? Is the Board school system, which is supported by *all* ratepayers, to be run on the Protestant family-party basis? And if the attempt be made, is it really possible to "reconcile" the views of the various Protestant denominations? Reconciliation, in this case, can only mean elimination. Everything must be cut away except what all Protestants agree about. And what *do* they agree about? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Why, the Unitarians, who are mentioned by the *Argus*, deny the deity of Jesus Christ, and many of them reject the Bible God. This "reconciliation" dodge never has succeeded and never will, for the points eliminated are just the very points on which sects divide, and which they always regard as of transcendent importance.

Dr. George C. Lorimer, of Boston, U.S.A., has been discoursing at Leytonstone on "The Human in the Divine." Evidently he put the cart before the horse, for what he meant was the Divine in the Human. He was endeavoring to explain the human element in the Bible, as if indeed there was anything else. He said: "God used men through whom to make known His will, and they expressed what was revealed in their own way." So that, if there was any revelation at all, it was to them and not to us, and we are to take it as they choose to give it us "in their own way." May we not, under the circumstances, prefer to be excused?

"When the doors were opened there was a dense throng. Then commenced the usual fight to get in. Ladies were lifted off their feet and badly used, and men were seen tearing and struggling as if they were in a football scrimmage." And for what? Why, to hear Sheldon. Isn't the world full of fools?

As we expected, the article in the *Christian World* on "The Mission of Illusion" has created some consternation in the religious camp. A correspondent writes to the *C. W.* that portions of it are "likely to unsettle the belief and impair the earnestness of young Christians." Poor dears, what a shame to shock 'em, and in a Christian journal too. "What does the writer mean?" asks the indignant correspondent, and he quotes a passage on which he remarks: "This sounds very like infidelity, and many other passages in his letter leave a similar impression." Suppose they do; the point is not whether they sound like "infidelity," but whether they are true. The editor adds a note in which he works out some fine gush about the "claims and power of Christ's religion," but fails to improve the situation.

The Gospel of St. John winds up, as Paine says, with a "thumping good lie." The said lie is as follows: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books" (John xxi. 25). In the fatuous fashion of his class, the Rev. Dr. George Matheson selected this verse as his text the other day, and a religious journal has published his sermon upon it. He does not seem to perceive the absurdity of the text. He takes it as Gospel truth. He does not tell us why we are left in ignorance of all these things. He does not deal with the very natural supposition that, if the records we have are so precious, the extraordinary mass of incident and no doubt of sayings which we have not might have comprised matter of the highest importance. Perhaps, after all, it is as well that we are not favored with the whole lot, for if John isn't a liar there would have been no room for any other books in the world, and we wouldn't like to be deprived of some that we possess even for an extended history of Jesus.

Speaking of the dearth of candidates for "holy orders," the Archbishop of Canterbury admits that "religious doubts still remain as an obstacle, and operate a good deal, certainly in public schools and universities."

Christians in Khaki is the title of a book just published. The author displays a lordly indifference to facts. For instance, he says: "One aspect of this war will never be forgotten, and that is the reverent recognition of God in the despatches of our Generals." There was, it is true, a pious allusion by Roberts, but one swallow does not make a summer. The *Rock* rightly describes the statement as one which, with a few exceptions, is not borne out by the facts. And it exclaims "Alas!" But why "alas"? Formal despatches are not the proper vehicles wherein to air one's piety.

At last the Peculiar People are disposed of—in an argumentative way. The *Church Times* has come down on them with a crusher. It says: "In their ignorance, they do not recognise that their prayers may be answered by the material means of the human agents employed by God." But there is no "may" about it. The promise is definitely "will." And the material means are specially excluded. In order to answer the Peculiars, the *Church Times* is obliged to go right away from the Scriptural injunctions on which they rely. Take James v. 14, 15: "Is there any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." Now where do doctors, medicines, any kind of human agency, apart from the elders and the oil, come in? If there is "ignorance" on the part of the Peculiars, there is either imbecility or dishonesty on the part of such organs as the *Church Times* in attempting to dismiss the matter by deliberately ignoring the sole basis of discussion.

The kinetoscope people missed a good thing by not having their machine for taking pictures in the Evangelical church of Penn Runn, Indiana county, Pa., at the last business meeting of that body. The mix-up was between the pastor and the deacons, and is thus detailed: Deacons Cameron and Mentch became involved in a controversy, Mentch finally

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attacking Cameron. The Rev. Mr. Strayer attempted to separate the combatants, and Mentch was thrown between two pews with the minister on top. Disliking the under-dog situation, Deacon Mentch punched his pastor in the face, whereupon Deacon Cameron whacked his colleague on the head with a poker. Mentch, still full of fight, threw the poker at Cameron, and alleges that at this juncture the Rev. Mr. Strayer jumped on his head. Informations charging and counter-charging assault and battery have been made as a result, and all the participants in the row are now under bail.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The editor of the New York *Sun*, being asked to explain his sentence, "Take away the creed and there is no Christ," replies that belief in the deity of Jesus Christ is the essence of Christianity. "If a man," he says, "does not start with this belief, there is no Christ for him—only Jesus as a human teacher of doctrines that may be accepted or rejected like all other human productions—like the teachings of Confucius, for instance—on their bare merits. But that is not religious belief; that is not believing in Christ as divine, and in Christianity as a religion. It is the agnostic or infidel view." We quite agree with this substantially, and have often said so.

The Sabbatarians are not to have it all their own way at Bournemouth, after all. Consequent upon the recent decision of the Town Council to grant in future only six days' licences, a meeting of the shareholders of one of the local omnibus companies has been held. Of 2,916 votes represented at the gathering, 2,766 were cast in favor of continuing the Sunday traffic, and only 150 against.

At Colwyn Bay the pious are making an effort to put down Sunday golf, boating, and coaching. "I wonder," says a writer in the *Sunday Chronicle*, "the parsons do not have the birds shot for singing on Sundays, and the flowers stamped out for daring to grow on that day. In fact, if they were consistent, they would denounce themselves for daring to speak on Sunday. It cannot be regarded as a labor of necessity or profit. Will the pious people of Colwyn Bay, desiring to put down unnecessary labor on the first day, inquire how many servants work in lodging-houses quite unnecessarily in superfluous attendance on people who ought to look after themselves?"

John Hollingshead, in his weekly letter to the *Umpire*, is specially moved to scorn at the attempt of the Colwyn pietists to stop the Sunday concerts, at which, he says, his old friend, M. Rivière, is giving the best of music, executed by a perfect orchestra. He protests against the "Gospel of Gloom."

At Inverness the Free Church Presbytery have discussed the "gross indecency" of a detachment of Cameron Highlanders being marched on a Sunday from their depot to the railway station, "preceded by the regimental band playing secular music." The Rev. Dr. Black said that such a thing had never been seen or heard of in Inverness before. Another member said that the local volunteers were similarly played to church. The Presbytery were horrified, but eventually came to the conclusion that it was no use remonstrating with a department like the War Office, who apparently are equal to any enormity. The subject was, therefore, despairingly dropped.

The West Croydon Congregational Church has lost one of its wealthiest supporters. He committed suicide by hanging himself. The vicar of Wellingborough has lost an "invaluable church officer." He has been sent to gaol for twelve months for embezzlement.

The Rev. W. Douglas, of St. John's Vicarage, Walthamstow, has been summoned as the leaseholder of insanitary house property at Barrows Place, Lee. The dwellings were described as "kennels unfit for human habitation." The Rev. Douglas was fined £1 in respect of each house from No. 6 to 16.

Some sensation has been caused in Hope, Flintshire, by the refusal of the rector, the Rev. T. E. Jones, to bury the body of a Mr. Collins when asked by the deceased man's daughter to officiate at the graveside. He said he was unable to accede to the request, as the man was "a pronounced unbeliever." Clergymen were not allowed to bury such, nor might the bell be tolled. Miss Collins says her father was a Unitarian. Possibly that makes him still worse in the eyes of the sky-pilot.

Robert Hichens favors the readers of the *Londoner* with a sketch, more or less humorous, of "The Serious Young Man." That interesting person, he says, "is, as a rule, an Atheist, and is very happy in his Atheism." Well, the admission that he can be happy in his Atheism is something. It does not agree with the caricatures by Dr. Talmage and his imitators, who cannot imagine an Atheist as anything but a gloomy, scowling monster, ever on the verge of suicide, if not of murder. Speaking of the Atheists' children, Mr. Hichens says: "No debauchery of rocking-horses, spades, buckets, and hoops is allowed to defile the early lives of these tiny Atheists." But what is there in Atheism to suggest that deprivation? If the "tiny Atheists" have no prospects of angels' wings, golden crowns, and tin trumpets hereafter, is not that a good reason why they should have rocking-horses, hoops, spades, etc., now? And play with them, moreover, on Sundays? That's really where the little Atheists get the pull.

In accordance with an old custom, the clergy and others assembled on the jetty at Folkestone on Sunday to invoke the Divine blessing on the fish harvest of the current year. Fish ought to be plentiful and cheap now—at any rate, near Folkestone. Common sense, however, seems to be scarce.

The Rev. Mr. Haweis was ill the other Sunday. His "curate took his place, and two of the congregation solemnly avowed that they could see the figure of Mr. Haweis standing by the side of the preacher." Those two gentlemen will do well to go straight home in future when they draw their wages on Saturday afternoon.—*Topical Times.*

"Sell all that ye have and give alms" is a saying attributed to Jesus. Nobody pays the least attention to it. Not even the paid preachers of his Gospel. Their reading is: "Get all you can, and give as little as possible." What care they about Christ's denunciations of the rich and his glorification of the poor? They rope in the shekels and take the risk. Here is a preacher of "the Word"—the Rev. Charles Greenway, of Darwen—who dies worth £106,089. He doesn't even trouble at death to distribute amongst the poor the treasures he has laid up during life, which treasures include his stipend for preaching the Gospel of Jesus. It seems to have occurred to him, in making his will, that he should do something "religious." So he affects humility, and asks his wife and daughter not to go into mourning for him. He is pretty certain that the poor wouldn't. However, he has gone to Jesus, and there is an eternity before him and the Nazarene in which they can discuss the whole question leisurely, and, we hope, without too much bickering.

Poor *Church Review!* After making itself ridiculous for years in the interests of the Ritualistic party, it is now discarded. It seems to have gone wrong on transubstantiation—a pretty long word to die on. A member of the Council of the English Church Union writes that "the *Church Review* has for some time done the Church cause no good." That, of course, might be said with equal truth of a number of other Church papers. Anyhow, another journal has been appointed as the official organ of the E. C. U., and the *Church Review* is now left to weep in isolation.

There are, at any rate in the Methodist New Connection, people who can see the real bearing of science on "revelation." A ministers' meeting at Leeds has been discussing "Evolution and its Relation to Religious Thought." They seem to have been specially knocked over "the Fall." Naturally enough, they found it impossible to reconcile that grey-headed fable with scientific fact. Still, they stuck to the old story. The doctrine of the Fall was propounded at the Methodist Conference in 1744. It was made perfectly clear then. Nobody doubted it in 1744, and why should the Connection be led away by Darwin, Wallace, Huxley, Spencer, or anybody else now?

The ministers criticised attempted reconciliations, and declared them "unsatisfactory." The bearing of evolution on redemption and regeneration was shown. One member said he was content to preach the doctrine of Paul and never mind the evolutionists. The Rev. J. S. Banks held that it was necessary to the doctrine of the Fall that man should have been complete in all his faculties, while evolution declared that he was not complete. "We could not agree," said another speaker, "to set aside key passages of Scriptures such as we met with in Paul's writings in favor of a hypothesis which needed much more proof or modification before it could be accepted with loyalty to Scripture." There is an honest, and to a certain extent a sensible, ring about this. The "key passages" of scriptures are dead against evolution, but the bulk of believers haven't the honesty to admit it.

The mission of Socrates, described by Sir Joshua Fitch in his recently-issued addresses on *Educational Aims and Methods*, is very much the same as that of the Freethinker of to-day: "The difficulties with which Socrates was confronted exist more or less in all ages of the world. He saw around him men who had never harbored doubts simply because they had never examined, who held convictions all the more angrily because those convictions had never been verified.....He chose for the objects of his attack opinions without knowledge, acquiescence without insight, words without meaning, and dogmas without proof."

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N.B.

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 15, at 11, Clerkenwell Green; at 7, Regent's Park: Freethought Demonstrations.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—July 15, at 11, Clerkenwell Green; at 7, Regent's Park: Freethought Demonstrations.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. COX.—Mr. Foote will post you an answer about September 9. In any case, he will be happy to give another Saturday evening lecture, before the Sunday meetings, in the large Rotunda Lecture Hall. The previous experiment there was very successful, as you remind us. See "Sugar Plums."

R. CHAPMAN.—See paragraph. Always glad to be of any service that way. We hope the South Shields friends will have fine weather and a "good time" on the 29th.

ELIZABETH.—We shall print your letter in our next issue, unless you advise us to the contrary. We wish women did take a greater interest in Freethought, but they seem to love their enslavers. Perhaps it is, as you say, the result of early education and deeply instilled prejudice.

"CHILPERIC" writes: "Mr. Porter has taken my article on 'Rothschild and the Saints' too seriously. I do not see that I am called upon to reply to his letter. As he says, the Baron bought his objects of art upon their merits; the gods and saints were accidents. The saints manifested the religious feeling of the age; the gods the higher culture of that period. Both were no doubt used as badges of guilds and political parties."

E. R. W.—Not finished, as you will see. We keep your letter over.

H. PERCY WARD.—We noticed in our last issue the new move of the Birmingham "Liberal Education Eight." The paragraph seems to have escaped your attention. We should imagine that you will find a good opportunity there to present the case for Secular Education. Of course it might conceivably be advisable to vote for God rather than the Devil, or for the Devil rather than God; but it is best to steer clear of both—as we have no doubt the Birmingham Secularists will realise.

E. VATTERLEIN.—See "Sugar Plums."

A. B. MOSS.—Received.

W. MANLEY.—A paragraph was already in type, based upon the secretary's letter. We hope the West Ham party to University College will be a good one. Such visits to places of educational interest should be cultivated, and we are glad to see your Branch moving in this direction.

H. B. AMOS.—Thanks for your letter. See paragraph. Mr. Foote will try to pay the establishment a visit when he is in the neighborhood.

E. G. JAMES.—Thanks for the cutting. It is a bit strong for the paper you took it from, but Freethought is spreading in all directions.

OLD SECULARIST.—We have said all we want to say on the matter. Repetition will not stop misrepresentation. The President of the N. S. S. must expect these pin-pricks. Bradlaugh had to bear plenty of them from the same journal. We have ridiculed Lord Robert's talk about God, and Sir George White's talk about God, and why should we not ridicule the ostentatious piety of President Kruger and his friends? Apart altogether from politics, the follies of religionists are fair game for us. We laugh at such follies when displayed in England, and are unable to see why they should not be laughed at when displayed in other parts of the world. We do not believe in holy lands or chosen peoples.

J. M. HEADLEY.—We wish you had a better opponent. Father Scott is a true priest—in manners and information. It is fortunate for you that you are not at his mercy. We believe he would settle your heretical hash in the good old Catholic style with the greatest relish, and cheerfully hand over your cinders to a cycle track.

ACOLYTE.—Thanks for your interesting and encouraging letter. You will see that we have noticed it in "Sugar Plums." Your suggestion as to books to read shall be remembered. We have often advised correspondents who have applied to us on this matter.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—English Mechanic—Crescent—Two Worlds—Ethical World—Yarmouth Mercury—Manchester Daily Dispatch—The People—Lucifer—Truthseeker (New York)—Labor Chronicle—Liberator—Boston Investigator—Humanity—Sunday Reader.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your useful batch of cuttings.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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Sugar Plums.

THE first of the new series of Sunday Freethought Demonstrations was held on Sunday afternoon in Finsbury Park. Mr. Schaller acted as chairman, and Mr. A. B. Moss was the first speaker, being followed by Mr. Charles Watts, who in turn was followed by Mr. Foote. The audience, which was a good one at the start, went on increasing in size, and was a splendid assembly before Mr. Foote concluded his address. Miss Vance and others took up a collection on behalf of the N. S. S. Mr. Wilson, as usual, kindly provided the brake and pair of horses.

The second of these Demonstrations will be held this morning (July 15) at Clerkenwell Green. The proceedings will commence at 11 o'clock. Mr. Foote, Mr. Watts, and Mr. Cohen will be amongst the speakers. The third Demonstration will take place in the evening at 7 o'clock in Regent's Park, opposite Gloucester Gate, and near the Park entrance to the Zoological Gardens. The speakers will be the same as those at the morning meeting.

Some of the baser sort of Christian Evidencers are openly threatening deliberate disorder on Clerkenwell Green—a fact which will doubtless secure a strong rally of Secular "saints" around the Freethought platform. For their own sakes, we hope these fanatical followers of the meek and lowly Jesus will keep away or lie low. The London hospitals are pretty full already.

A letter reaches us from a correspondent in Surrey, who was a devout Christian until about four years ago, when he accidentally got hold of a copy of Robert Taylor's *Devil's Pulpit*. That broke the ice of his orthodoxy, and soon afterwards he became a regular reader of the *Freethinker*, thanks to which he is now a saved soul—saved, that is, from the curse of superstition. This gentleman had never been present at a Freethought meeting, but he travelled up to London last Sunday to see what such gatherings were like, and especially to see what the speakers were like, for awful pictures of them were presented to his former orthodox imagination. He went to Finsbury Park and "assisted," as the French say, at the Freethought Demonstration in the afternoon. He was delighted with the speeches, and much struck by the "refined and intelligent audience." In the morning he had been to hear Mr. Cohen at Ridley-road, and was very much pleased with him, though not with the audience. He says that Mr. Cohen's opponent was a rank fool, and that the "personal abuse" he heard from Christians was "disgusting."

Mr. Cohen had two fine meetings in Victoria Park on Sunday. The evening meeting was to have heard a debate, but there was none, although there were two speakers. Mr. Cohen's concluding speech was loudly applauded.

The *Truthseeker* (New York) devotes more than two columns to a report of the National Secular Society's Annual Conference. Our contemporary says that the President "showed considerable skill in handling" the matter of the resolution about the war in South Africa.

The *Labor Chronicle* (Liverpool) laughs at the notion of "Providence." "If the 'Divine Power' rather than the genius of Roberts and the gallantry and endurance of our troops," it says, "was responsible for the relief of Mafeking, the same power was responsible for not relieving it earlier and at a less terrible cost to our troops. It was also responsible for the disasters of Magersfontein and Spion Kop. The fact is, a British bullet will not kill a Boer unless it is shot straight, though all the churches in the country petitioned for victory." Our contemporary also notes that going to church and chapel has no appreciable influence in shortening the hours of labor or bettering the wages of the workers.

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In spite of the efforts of the clergy, the number of School Boards in this country increases. Twelve new Boards were formed in England and Wales during the first half of the present year, and nearly all of them in rural districts, where the parsons look upon them as branch establishments of Sheol.

The Sheffield "saints" have more than once visited Tuxford Hall, Tuxford, the seat of R. S. Wilson, Esq., who generously allows the public to view his house, grounds, and garden, and often acts as *chaperon* himself. There are many reasons why Freethinkers should pay the place a visit. It contains a lot of rare and valuable articles; such as fine tapestry and china, Lord Byron's dining table and bedstead, King John's chairs from Newark Castle, and glorious pictures by Rembrandt, Murillo, Teniers, and other masters. Mr. Wilson is described by a Freethinker, Mr. H. B. Amos, as "a striking personality" and a "delightfully humorous guide."

Liverpool Freethinkers should note that the local N. S. S. Branch has its annual picnic next Sunday (July 22). Brakes will leave the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, for Aughton, *via* Ince Wood, at 2 p.m. prompt. The tickets for the drive and tea are 3s. 6d. each, cyclists 2s. Friends intending to join the party should send in their names by July 15 to Mr. Hammond, 26 Sandheys-street, Kirkdale, or to Mr. Cox, 1 Dove-road, Orrell-park, Walton, in order that the catering arrangements may be carried out satisfactorily.

The South Shields Branch holds its annual picnic on Sunday, July 29, Holywell Dene being the appointed destination. It will be necessary to make accommodation for friends and visitors, and all who intend to join the picnic should communicate as early as possible with the secretary, Mr. R. Chapman, 30 Madras-street.

Mr. H. Percy Ward visits Northampton to-day (July 15). He is billed to hold a public debate in the Market-square with Mr. H. Quelch, editor of *Justice*, on the question, "Can Socialism Benefit the People?" The encounter is to open at 11 in the morning, and to be resumed (both disputants surviving) at 6.30 in the evening.

A West Ham Branch party is going to visit University College, Gower-street, on Saturday afternoon (July 14) to view the "Antiquities from Excavations at Abydos." Friends joining the party will meet at Stratford Main Station at 2 o'clock sharp.

The Betrayal of Burton.

"What a man was while he could stand, speak, and write, is matter of interest and importance to those who care to know anything about him: when he cannot, it may be assumed that he can no longer think for himself."—A. C. SWINBURNE.

"Those vulgar heads that look asquint on the face of Truth."—SIR THOMAS BROWNE *(Religio Medici)*.

PRIESTS seldom appear so disgusting as when acting the part of holy hyænas over the dead bodies of their opponents. Prince Jerome Napoleon, for instance, a well-known Freethinker, was smuggled into the great lying Catholic Church at the last moment, when he was unconscious. It may be pleaded in excuse that his relations were anxious for the welfare of his "soul"; but the spectacle of a Christian hyæna administering the sacrament to the dead body of a man who had fought against the Christian religion in the full strength of his manhood is none the less odious.

The most low varlets of the Most High God did the same thing with Sir Richard Burton. It was nothing to these creatures that their grim farce would, if taken seriously, give the lie to the dead man's whole life. All they cared for was that the world should understand that this terrible infidel had submitted to Holy Mother Church at the last. While Richard Burton was sound and strong, his contemptuous disgust of their insane creed was wont to exhaust the whole vocabulary of his scorn. But when the living man was replaced by the helpless corpse, nothing hindered these Christian body-snatchers at their ghastly death-bed revels.

Burton had travelled too widely, and mixed with too many men of all creeds and no creed, to regard any religion as the sole depository of truth. Christianity dwindled in his mind to its true proportions. It was not the only religion, but one amongst very many. He did not even believe in the idea of immortality. He thought all notions of another existence were simply idealised copies of the present:—

Then, if Nirwana round our life with nothingness, 'tis haply best;
Thy toil and troubles, want and woe, at length have won their guerdon—Rest.

Burton was indeed a Secularist in the highest and noblest sense of the term. His advice was always practical. Uproot ignorance, avoid self-torment, do good for its own sake, and "Abjure the Why and seek the How."

From these convictions, arrived at in the prime of his intellect, and after profound study, Richard Burton never swerved. He was perfectly frank and absolutely fearless. His fine poem, the *Kasidah*, his "Terminal Essay" in his magnificent edition of the *Arabian Nights*, almost his latest work, will satisfy any fair-minded reader of his innate scepticism. Burton was a complete Freethinker. His views were not merely anti-Christian, but were opposed to the invertebrate eclecticism of the day. He looked with cynical eyes on all religions, but towards the great lying Catholic Church he had a most positive aversion; and, as subsequent sad events proved, not without reason. It was over the dead body of this man that the awful farce of a pretended conversion was acted. Burton died suddenly at 7 a.m., October 20, 1890. No sooner did Lady Isabel Burton, who was a bigoted Catholic, perceive her husband's life was in danger than she sent for a priest. When he arrived, the great Freethinker was far beyond the reach of human folly and superstition. This is perfectly certain. The doctor who attended the deceased, and Lady Burton's maid, both agree in declaring that Sir Richard had expired before the priest's arrival. This did not daunt Isabel Burton, whose love for Christ was greater than her affection for her husband. Hardly had the priest crossed the threshold than she flung herself at his feet and implored him to administer extreme unction. The Father at first demurred. There had been no profession of faith, he urged. There could be none now, for Burton was dead. But Lady Burton would take no refusal. She remained weeping and wailing on the floor. To terminate a scene, and to advance the interests of the Church, the rite was performed. The Great Lying Church of Rome took formal possession of Sir Richard Burton's corpse, and pretended, moreover, with sacred and insufferable insolence, to take under her august protection his "soul." Burton's funeral took place in the largest church in Trieste, and was made the excuse for an ecclesiastical triumph of a faith the great man had always loathed. Even the disgraceful demonstration at Trieste was not sufficient. The fraudulent funeral ceremonies were repeated in England. Again, at Mortlake, the shaven priests intoned the Mass, again the acolyte bearing the hated crucifix preceded the helpless corpse to the grave. Once more was Truth trampled under foot in a vain endeavor to exalt a Church over a formidable enemy. It was, indeed, a painful sequel to a noble death. The pity of it is too deep for tears.

Sir Richard Burton was one of the most romantic figures of our time. He was one of those men who helped to make the greatness of England, and who spread the fame of our country over many lands and seas. A great traveller, an unrivalled linguist, a splendid scholar, his life and works remain as a precious legacy to us. If he should ever be forgotten, it will be because his country has degenerated. His magnificent personality was woven of the soundest fibres that are in the breed of one of the noblest races that ever peopled this earth. As Swinburne has so finely said:—

While England sees not her old praise dim,
While still her stars through the world's night swim,
A fame outshining her Raleigh's fame,
A light that lightens her loud sea's rim,
Shall shine and sound as her sons proclaim
The pride that kindles at Burton's name,
And joy shall exalt their pride to be
The same in birth if in soul the same.

MIMNERMUS.

"What do you know about Cain and Abel?" asked Sister of a very new boy who, though fifteen years old, could neither read nor write. "O, I knows about them, Sister; Abel, you know, he gave the Lord a lamb, but Cain gave only the *groceries!*"

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God and Evolution.

EVOLUTION is an attractive subject, and just now a variety of writers and speakers are choosing it as a theme upon which to display their wisdom, or lack of it, in various branches of science, philosophy, religion, or sociology. Of course, Dr. Talmage must have his say on the subject, and, under the title of "Divine Evolution," he settles Darwin's great doctrine at one stroke by calling it "a heathenism more than a thousand years old." Some of the learned clergy of the Church of England have dealt with evolution in relation to the teachings of the Bible, and others have viewed it in regard to Christianity; and at last a leading Wesleyan minister has made bold to deal with the subject in three lectures. The name of this Wesleyan minister is the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, M.A., M.L.S.B., warden of Bermondsey Settlement, and a man who bids fair to become president of the Wesleyan movement in the near future. The utterances of such a man, therefore, are worthy of consideration, even when we do not agree with him. The Rev. Scott Lidgett entitled his first lecture "God and Evolution," his second "Man and Evolution," and his third "Religion and Evolution"; and it must be admitted that his treatment of the subject was extremely able, and displayed an argumentative power far above that of the ordinary Christian controversialist. It is undoubtedly an evidence of the progressive spirit of the age to find a Wesleyan minister who is a pronounced evolutionist, for not only would no Christian minister have dared to announce himself on the side of Darwin or evolution twenty years ago, but the illustrious Darwin himself was then regarded as the worst of heretics, and his teaching treated with ridicule and contempt by every section of the Christian community. Indeed, although the remains of Charles Darwin were buried in Westminster Abbey, it was commonly considered by Christians that his soul would be consigned to hell. Science, however, has triumphed, and now the once maligned Darwin is glorified, and statues to his memory are erected not only at his birthplace at Shrewsbury and at Oxford University, but also in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington. Most assuredly Darwin has triumphed over his enemies, for now he is glorified and they are (intellectually) tormented.

But let us examine some of the arguments used in the Rev. Scott Lidgett's first lecture on "Evolution and God." The rev. gentleman states the doctrine of evolution in a perfectly fair and straightforward fashion, and frankly confesses that he gives it his intellectual adherence; but when he proceeds to say that his idea of God is in no way interfered with by the acceptation of this doctrine, we find ourselves compelled to join issue. In the first place, we have to observe that he does not define what he means by God. But it is quite clear that he believes in a universe that is practically infinite, and also in a God that either permeates the universe, and cannot be differentiated from it (in which case he is a Pantheist), or in an infinite God who exists *plus* the universe—which is manifestly a contradiction in terms.

"If," as the Rev. Scott Lidgett says, "the universe in all its parts is now conceived to be the result of a gradual, orderly, self-continuing, and natural evolution or development," at what point in the development of the universe does God come in? Did God exist before the universe, and, if so, where? By most evolutionists the universe is conceived to be eternal; indeed, it is impossible in thought to conceive of the universe beginning to be, and the word "creation," in the sense of origination of substance, has no meaning to the minds of scientific men. The universe is conceived to be "the sum of all phenomena," to use John Stuart Mill's words, "together with the causes which produce them, including not only all that happens, but all that is capable of happening—the unused capabilities of matter being as much a part of the idea of nature as those which take effect" (*Essay on Nature*). Man, in short, knows nothing but phenomena, and these phenomena are not only effects, but effects and causes in a limitless chain; and in an infinite regression there can be no first cause.

The Rev. Scott Lidgett, however, gives a new reading in the light of evolution in reply to three general arguments of the Rationalist—viz., (1) The argument from design in nature; (2) that the higher nature of man, being a natural and gradual evolution, ceases to bear witness to a supernatural source; (3) that the universe is the natural unfolding of phenomenal existence from an unknown and unknowable source.

Now, in reference to the first argument, he admits that a change has taken place in recent years in the mental point of view of the Theist. But he contends that there is still evidence of design, only we must take the latest phenomena as a whole, and not phenomena in the various stages of their development, as far as we can go backwards. We, however, submit that we have no option but to deal with "alleged design" in detail, since man has no knowledge of the universe as a whole. And if we take design as we find it, it manifests such ugly results in parts that it either impeaches the wisdom or goodness or infinite power of its alleged author. The doctrine of evolution accounts, for instance, for such hideous growths as cancers and tumors in human beings on purely natural grounds; it accounts also for tapeworms, infectious diseases, earthquakes, famines, in a similar manner; but, on the assumption of their design by an intelligent and good God, they are hard to explain away. "The elimination of the unfit" by the hard and cruel law of "the survival of the fittest" is easily explained on the ground of natural law; but on the hypothesis of a beneficent and powerful Deity, who is watching over and protecting the weak, it is altogether inexplicable. Mr. Scott Lidgett says that those who substitute evolution for God merely personify an abstraction. But is he not doing the same thing himself when he puts God behind phenomena, and calls God the cause? After all, to the philosopher and scientist, is not God equivalent to the algebraic x? Mirabaud or D'Holbach was not far wrong when he said that a god who was not a person was no god at all. Mr. Lidgett argues that God is the mind or reason behind phenomena—back of all evolution. But what does man know of mind apart from matter? Mind apart from matter is a pure abstraction. In fact, we only know mind as a quality, or combination of qualities, of organised beings. Is, then, Mr. Lidgett's God an organised being? Has he a brain? Does he perceive objects external to himself? Does he judge between two or more perceptions? If he does, he must be continually gaining knowledge; in other words, he is not omniscient—that is, he is not all-wise from the beginning; that is, he is not God.

In respect to the second argument Mr. Lidgett says: "Reason is no less wonderful, and its testimony none the less conclusive as to its source, if it has been naturally evolved." No Rationalist doubts that reason is a wonderful result; but he certainly does dispute that man knows anything about a spiritual source, however ardently some profess to believe in it. The reason of the dog, the elephant, or the ape is just as wonderful as the reason of man, notwithstanding the vast difference in the degree of development; yet we never hear of anyone claiming a "spiritual source" for their intelligence; indeed, it is only since men of science have dealt with the question of mind in animals that we have come to see that there is no break in the development of the reasoning faculties in animals and man, from the lowest to the highest.

With regard to the third argument, Mr. Lidgett does not agree with the Agnostic who says that "both the nature of things and the nature of our minds preclude us from passing beyond." It is quite obvious, however, that the finite mind can only grasp the finite. The patriarch Job acknowledged that man could not by searching find out God. But what other rational method could man adopt for finding him? The theologian practically says: "Admit his existence, and then all else follows." Exactly. But that is precisely the admission that no Atheist or Agnostic is prepared to make; for these know something about the evolution of the God idea—from its primitive stages up to the highest and best idea of the most cultivated Theist of to-day. Therefore, when the Theist argues that "God is a power that lives and works in and through the universe," we see in this a return to the nature worship of our early ancestors. We know also that the next stage brought about "fetish worship," and that, ultimately

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projecting himself behind phenomena, man pictured in his mind the anthropomorphic God of the Bible—Yahveh. The Rev. Scott Lidgett does not believe in any of these conceptions of Deity, and yet, if our early ancestors were wrong in the conceptions of God, what better evidence has he that he is right? All conceptions of God are purely subjective—that is, they exist only in the mind; and we can never know absolutely whether there is anything in nature or outside nature—if there is an outside—to correspond to our ideas. Curé Meslier, in his *Bon Sens*, makes the clever remark that "God is an idea without an archetype"; and, after all discussion, we find that theologians, in depicting their gods, are describing mere "figments of the imagination"—ideas, in fact, which have nothing in nature to correspond to them.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Correspondence.

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As to the charge that I continue to talk in a "Pickwickian" style, I may point out that if the secular use of religious words were merely "metaphorical," as sundry remarks of "Chilperic" imply, this alone would lift them far above a Pickwickian sense (which, as readers of the commencement of *Pickwick* can see for themselves, is mere self-stultification); for metaphor is a perfectly sincere, legitimate, and often highly expressive form or figure of speech—which can by no means be said of a "Pickwickian sense" that empties words of all ascertainable meaning.

Concerning the various points at issue, it seems to me that "Chilperic" has often preferred to meet the less important portions of my statements and arguments, while leaving the more essential or crucial points untouched—as, for instance, in the way in which he whittles down my charge of unfairness to the mere difference between "unfairness" and being "not quite fair." The tedious and complicated task of establishing all such cases in detail would, however, consume far more time than such controversy is worth. I will therefore endeavor to limit my reply to such observations as may help to elucidate the fundamental question in dispute—namely, whether the use of the word "religion" is permissible in a non-theological as well as in a theological or superstitious sense.

For this purpose we need in the first place a definition of the word in question. But "Chilperic" protests that "When 'religion' is defined as a system of faith and worship it should be obvious that *religious* faith is referred to." To find out what "religion" means we have to ask what "religious" means. We find that it means "pertaining to religion." So that religion is only such faith and worship as pertain to religion; and as to what religion actually is we are still left in the dark, so far as "Chilperic's" amended definition is concerned. Now a definition of a word has to define it—that is, to distinguish it from all other words. A definition which is incomplete without the introduction of the word to be defined is a mockery or sham, because it leaves the meaning still undetermined. Each disputant will still give his own meaning to the word thus left undefined.

"Chilperic's" distinction between "actual worship" and "metaphorical worship" similarly begs the question at issue; for it assumes that "worship" applies only to deity, whereas the word is secular in origin and fundamental meaning. A reference to dictionaries will at once show that "Chilperic" has no right to limit the use of the word "worship" to superstitious purposes. It is, I maintain, used with perfect propriety and fitness in Carlyle's work on Hero-worship, however Pickwickian a sense may be attributed to the term by critics who fail to perceive that it has become an established portion of the English language. Another objection is that in cases like that of worship (which consists of feelings and their manifestations) the distinction between metaphor and literal reality is usually of no very material importance. One easily perceives a very great difference between the literal fire of the blacksmith's forge and the metaphorical "fire" of poetic genius; but there is no such important difference between "actual" (literal) respect and a "metaphorical" respect, which is so like actual respect that we call it respect as the most suitable image or similitude. Similarly there is little, if any, difference between "actual" literal compliments and "metaphorical" compliments, or between actual reverence and "metaphorical" reverence, or between actual praise and "metaphorical" praise, or between actual veneration or worship or faith and "metaphorical" veneration or worship or faith. If, however, "Chilperic" is satisfied with the validity of his own distinctions, I can suggest an excellent *modus vivendi* for the two schools of Secular thought represented by himself and Mr. Gould. Let "Chilperic" admit the otherwise objectionably religious expressions as merely metaphorical—that is, as similes or images which most conveniently represent the reality intended—just as we readily accept Chilperic's "metaphorical" application of the theological term "canonised" to Freethinkers, whom he thus treats as saints of the new religion of humanity which he finds so objectionable, and just as others of his school freely allow themselves to use such convenient expressions as the "Gospel of Freethought," etc., though they would raise a protest against Mr. Gould's doing so. The "religion of doing good" seems to be at least as allowable a metaphor as the canonization of an Atheist by another Atheist. One of the widely-accepted definitions of the word "religion" is "a system of faith and worship." Very well. The Positivists can claim that they have "a system of faith" (in moral laws, virtues, etc.) "and of worship" (of humanity in its highest examples and ideals). Then, according to the definition given, the Comtist's "Religion of Humanity" *is* a religion. Even if we insert the word "religious," as "Chilperic" would insist, the Positivist would of course say that his faith and worship *are* religious, and that his religion therefore answered to the amended definition. But "Chilperic" may say that belief in Deity must be introduced. If so, pure Buddhism, being atheistic, will be excluded from the world's religions, though Buddhism is almost universally admitted to be a religion and to count a larger number of adherents than any other religion. And we might also have to exclude such primitive religions as do not rise above Shamanism (belief in omens, occult influences, incantations or magical rites, etc.), or various forms or stages of fetishism, nature-worship, ancestor-worship, etc.

Chambers's Encyclopædia reminds us that "The difficulty of framing a correct definition of religion is very great." The "great diversity of views," it continues, after mentioning Kant's and Matthew Arnold's definitions among others, "indicates what investigation is found to confirm—viz., that religion is a vast and complex thing, an inexhaustible field for psychological study. Almost all the views referred to have some truth in them."

The subjective nature of religion has been pointed out by "Chilperic." Speaking of the word "religion," the *Globe Encyclopædia* says: "Subjectively it expresses a state of mind, but of what that state of mind consists there have been as many explanations as there have been writers on the subject." As to what is the essence of religion, answers by some of the "greatest thinkers" are then given. Some of these answers do not necessarily include belief in Deity. Thus Schleiermacher considers that the essence of religion is the feeling of absolute dependence; Fichte, faith in the moral order of the universe; Hegel, morality become conscious of the free universality of its concrete essence; Comte, the worship of humanity; to which we might add Matthew Arnold's and John Stuart Mill's views of religion as emotionalised morality. Evidently there is conflict of opinion, and thinkers need not be in a hurry to hurl boulders at the glass houses of other thinkers.

Entick's Latin Dictionary gives the English equivalents of the atin word *religio* thus: "Religion, piety, devotion, godliness, the worship of God, superstition, veneration, sacredness, dread, doubt, or scruple, sign or prognostic, sincerity, faithfulness, oath." It also notes that "religio est" meant "I scruple, I am afraid." The actual origin of the word is uncertain, but it is usually traced to a word meaning "to bind," just as our words "justice," "jury," "judge," etc., have been evolved from the primitive Aryan root *yu*, to bind or join. The ordinarily-accepted derivation from *ligo*, I bind (the root of our words "obligation," "ligament," etc.), and the intensifying prefix *re*, may be correct, though rejected by various discordant authorities; and the word may well have had the primary meaning of *restraint* or *binding obligation*, as is commonly suggested. In dealing with its most probable origin, Richardson's Dictionary speaks of the word "religion" as "seeming emphatically to express the reciprocal *bond* or obligation of man to man, and also the obligation or duty of man to the gods in heathen times, and to God among Christians." Other suggested derivations from *religens*, the opposite of *negligens* or negligent, or from the same root as our "reck," to regard (seen in our "reckless"), and the Greek *alegein*, to have a care, heed, reck, would give the word "religion" the primary meaning of seriousness, carefulness, dutiful diligence—a meaning not very dissimilar from that of restraint or obligation. There is not the slightest sign or hint from any quarter that the word "religion" can be traced back to any word meaning God or gods, and the use of the prefix *re* seems to be against any such supposition. Therefore the original (though probably prehistoric and unrecorded) meaning of the word may well have been secular and moral, to which superstitious terrors and occult influences may sooner or later have been added as enforcing agencies. It seems quite possible that the non-theological religionists may not merely be employing the word "religion" in the best sense which it has yet evolved, but may be rescuing the word from the superstitious corruption and bondage superimposed upon the original meaning in varying degrees.

Ample evidence can be collected, if necessary, to show that, in Emerson's words, "The progress of religion is steadily to its identity with morals." This evolution is natural, and not arbitrary. The very growth of the ethical element of the

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moral religions necessarily means the weakening and ultimate abandonment of the superstitious element. And the moral and social emotion which inspires the really valuable portion of the moral religions has, at least, a fairly reasonable or arguable claim to the name under which it has worked for ages past, and which, from the effects of custom and old association, best expresses an emotionalised frame of mind, for which the word "morality," signifying mere *outward* good conduct, is felt to be too weak and inadequate an expression.

One practical point ought to be tolerably clear—namely, that pelting "valued" friends and fellow Secularists with hard words—as in falsely (as *they* hold) accusing them of a Pickwickianism (or comical meaninglessness) which they feel to be the very opposite of a truthful description of their frame of mind, likening them to that disreputable personage, the prodigal son, feeding on the husks the swine did eat, and making them, as far as possible, the victims of "sardonic mirth," by means which appear to them to savor of flippancy or unfairness—is not the best way of converting the recipients of such compliments to a school of thought and feeling which employs such methods, nor the best way of promoting good feeling and harmonious co-operation among fellow-workers in the great Secular Movement which we should all have at heart as far more important than the task of provoking or aggravating differences between two sections of the party by ridiculing or denouncing the secular use of a word whose origin and legitimate meanings and uses are disputed, and whose use, in a purely secular sense, is warmly advocated by so good an Atheist as John Stuart Mill, as well as by many other writers of various shades of opinion. I notice that, while "Chilperic" is indignant that men who "reject every real belief in a personal deity and revelation" do not openly accept their proper designation of Atheist, he, nevertheless (in utter defiance of the teachings which he so vigorously urges upon *us*), allows himself to call precisely such an Atheist "a very pious religionist." If "Chilperic" would only be as charitable towards other Secularists as he is to himself, our dispute would be at an end.

"In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity," is an admirable saying, which all Freethinkers would do well to adopt, in spite of its ecclesiastical associations and origin.

To the Secularists whom "Chilperic" lightly styles "Objectionables," religion, faith, hero-worship, etc., are not mere "husks" (except so far as *all* words are mere husks or symbols), but are invaluable kernels and pearls of great price. That such words are solely theological in their bearing, and that they are emptied of all their meaning when theological associations are abandoned, is mere arbitrary assumption. The smartest and most vigorous of observations, based on such assumption, merely beg the question at issue.

As to the case against a purely secular use of such theological words as "God" and "Christian," "Chilperic" is, of course, well aware that Mr. Gould and I do not oppose him on such extreme points. But there are many words on the borderland, such as "religion," "piety," "devotion," "worship," "holy," "sacred," etc., which have already been used in secular or ethical as well as in theological senses; and in such cases, I think, an attitude of tolerance is far wiser and more becoming than one of implacable war or cynical and sardonic mirth. I believe that Bacon was quite right when he spoke of the "natural piety" of Atheists; that Carlyle's "hero-worship" is as legitimate and unmetaphorical a term as ancestor-worship; that Bradlaugh was very far from being a weakling or a timid time-server when he spoke of his "faith"; that Ingersoll and many other Freethinkers were justified in using various religious words which "Chilperic" would stigmatise as objectionable; that Cicero and Comte and Robert Owen and Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill ought not to be regarded as mere Pickwickian food for laughter when they advocated an emotional or philosophical "religion" independent of supernaturalism, but that their arguments, and still more their lofty motives and feelings in the matter, deserve respectful consideration rather than the "sardonic mirth" of the mocking "cynic." If "Chilperic" puts forward extreme instances in support of "sardonic mirth" directed against fellow Secularists who do not advocate such extremes, I may far more fairly retaliate by bringing to the front various words at the other end of the scale which have actually been objected to by Secularists holding "Chilperic's" views. Surely the cynic can find food for sardonic mirth—or, seeing that I prefer that our mirth, especially over the inconsistencies or weaknesses of valued friends and fellow-workers, should be neither cynical nor sardonic (we can love men even while we laugh at them), let us say that even the most amiable of philosophers must find something amusingly (or perhaps pathetically) ridiculous in the spectacle of honest men who earnestly insist that we shall write them down as faithless beings utterly destitute of conscience (see last year's controversy in the *Freethinker*), and as enemies of righteousness, to whom nothing is sacred, not even the memory or the grave of the most loved or honored of their kind. If "mirth" is to decide the matter, I do not think the balance of the fun will be on "Chilperic's" side. Mr. Baker's allegorical dream has shown us how we can depict the fanatical anti-fanatic as rejecting the offer of Christian buildings, and as urging us to demolish all sacred edifices on the plea that the form of the churches is that of the Cross, that the spires point heavenward, and that the most beautiful of cathedrals, and the most convenient of Christian chapels and meeting-houses, are so polluted with the dangerous infection of the pious associations of the past that they are frightful plague-spots, which can only be cleansed by wholesale conflagration; and we might similarly caricature the over-zealous anti-religionist as scrupulously rejecting, on behalf of the nation, the broad lands and funds and other endowments of the fading superstition. If we are so wickedly inclined, we can also satirise the anti-theological Quixote as "religiously" starting a crusade of denunciation and protest against other people's use (or even against his own use as well) of such religion-saturated expressions as "adieu" (= to God), "good-bye" (= God be with ye), "Christmas" (which must be doubly objectionable as including both "Christ" and the religious ceremony of the "mass"), and the names of the week, which all savor of idolatry.

Will it not be better to bury the hatchet and smoke the pipe of peace, and study how to unite the forces of Secularism, rather than to disintegrate them? W. P. BALL.

THE WORD "RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have followed this correspondence with great interest, especially as the question involved has occupied my attention for twenty years, recognising, as I did then, that the constructive side of Freethought lacked motivity and a *nom de guerre*. I only intervene now because it appears to me that the main issue is forgotten in the latter letters, owing to side issues absorbing attention. I take it that Mr. Gould himself must surely now recognise the futility of Freethinkers trying to retain the word "religion" in its present form to signify that constructive ethical system which is about to supersede the effete creed of Christendom and Mohammedanism, and all the other isms bred of a preposterous spiritism and personification of idea. One of the latest apologetic definitions of religion is that given by Sheldon in one of his rhodomontades. He says "it is no string of dogmas, but just His calling us by name"! So! This is throwing Jonah overboard with a vengeance, and without even a whale to catch him! It is just upon such flimsy legerdemot that Christian propaganda now rests. It must be evident that such a term, so elastic in signification, is repellent to the accurate thinker. By adopting it baldly we would make the same mistake as the theologians themselves have made, who have swallowed the theory of evolution, and are now striving to make it appear that the tribal and dogmatic Yahveh or Elohim, whom they worship as God, is identical with the "immanent presence" in nature, but without adducing a single thread of proof in support of their contention, and so incurring the ridicule of most thoughtful and intellectually honest men.

Some years ago, in a pamphlet *On Faith as an Intellectual Function*, I proposed the term Eufidelity, being mainly concerned to supplant the term Infidelity, which, by the malevolence of "believers" so-called, had obtained an accretion of odium. It did not "catch on," however, and so now I would submit "eucredism," or the old word with the prefix eu—viz., eureligion. These may not be the best, but their suggestion may lead to the evolution of the best—that is, the fittest.

ROBERT PARK, M.D.

No Bikes Admitted.

From early morn till dewy eve,
Scarce stopping for a meal,
Through lanes and roads the maiden sped,
Perched high upon her wheel.

At last she flew to realms above,
But there—Oh! sad, sad fate!—
She found a sign, "No bikes allowed,"
A-hanging on the gate.

"Oh! let me in, kind saint!" she cried;
But Peter said: "No, no;
You've brought your bike; if you must ride,
There's a cinder path below."

The two following items are taken from the *Puritan*: "A Mill Hill school boy, in a recent examination, gave the following explanation of 'the rent was made worse.' 'In those days coats were very gorgeous, so a man didn't have one of his own, but some other man made a lot and let them out; so then, of course, if he headed one with a new bit, he raised the price, and the rent was made worse.'" "Another Mill Hill boy being required to write a life of St. Luke, did it thus: 'St. Luke was an Apostal, but not an Evangel; he wrote a gopsal which bares his name and the book of Genekies.'"

The most charming metempsychosis is that in which we see ourselves live again in others.—*Goethe.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

Open-air Propaganda.

Regent's Park (opposite Gloucester Gate): 7, Freethought Demonstration.

Station-road (Camberwell): 11.30, A. B. Moss.

Brockwell Park: 3.15, A. B. Moss; 6.30, C. Cohen.

Peckham Rye: 3.15, E. Pack.

Finsbury Park: 3.30, A lecture.

Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, R. P. Edwards.

Battersea Park Gates: 11.30, F. A. Davies.

Clerkenwell Green: 11, Freethought Demonstration.

Kingsland (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, W. Heaford; 7.15, S. E. Easton. July 18, at 8.15, C. Cohen.

Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, W. Ramsey.

West Ham Branch (Stratford Grove): 7.30, F. A. Davies.

COUNTRY.

Birmingham Branch (in the Bull Ring): 11, H. Griffin, "Social Evolution."

Chatham Secular Society (Queen's-road, New Brompton): Closed during the months of July and August.

Liverpool: Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, closed until September 2. Outdoor lectures at the Monument, bottom of London-road, on August 12, 19, and 26, at 7 p.m.; and on September 2, at 3 p.m.

Sheffield Secular Society (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' Quarterly Meeting; 5, Tea; 7, Musical and other Recitals, etc.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—July 15, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park; e., Demonstration at Regent's Park. 18, e., Mile End Waste. 22, a., Victoria Park; e., Hyde Park Demonstration. 29, m., Station-road, Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye; e., West Ham Demonstration.

Arthur B. Moss, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—July 15, m., Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park. 22, Northampton. 29, m., Mile End; e., Stratford. August 26, m., Mile End.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—July 15, Debate at Northampton. 22, Birmingham. 29, Manchester. August 19, Nortampton.

F. A. Davies, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—July 15, m., Battersea; a., Stratford. 29, m., Station-road; a., Peckham Rye.

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[*Continued on p. 447. Look There!*]

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THE

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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Jehovah's Apples.

IT is not often that a Christian minister sends us a letter for publication, but our readers will find one on a later page of this week's *Freethinker*. The writer resents the idea that the clergy are afraid of debate. He also complains of our ridiculing the Christian view of the Fall in an extract headed "That Pippin" from our *Bible Romances*. "Assuredly," he says, "no scoffing or jeering is a worthy method of dealing with the question." But the laughing and jeering, in this particular case, simply consist in divesting the story of its factitious glamor and placing it in the clear daylight of common sense. Many absurd Bible stories are told with great solemnity, because the authors, as well as their first readers, regarded them as actual occurrences; for the supernatural was in their eyes as ordinary as the natural. Talking snakes and donkeys are serious enough to savages and barbarians, as they are to children who listen to fairy tales. But when we cease to believe in their possibility they become ridiculous, and solemnity gives place to laughter. The point of view is everything in these matters. What is irreverence to the man who believes is honest derision to the man who disbelieves. When the Christian complains of "scoffing and jeering" he simply lacks imagination, and fails to put himself mentally in the sceptic's place.

It should also be borne in mind that temperament plays a large part even in the most important discussions. The solemn man wonders what the humorist is "grinning" about, and the humorist wonders how on earth the solemn man is able to keep such a long face. Bishop South, one of the masters of English prose, was very witty; and he was taken to task by a dull *episcopus* for sprinkling his sermons with such "levities." "Now, my dear brother in the Lord," he replied, "do you mean to say that if God had given you any wit you would not have used it?"

Mr. Alcock, our clerical correspondent, is certainly a very serious man. It takes a great deal of seriousness at this time of day to enable even a clergyman to believe that Adam and Eve were real personages, and that the Garden of Eden was a definite portion of the earth's surface. Most clergymen nowadays treat this story as symbolic or allegorical, but Mr. Alcock appears to accept it as actual history. This may not be flattering to his intelligence, but it speaks volumes for his honesty. He is, indeed, a most simple-minded believer. We suppose he would have believed it devoutly if the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, instead of the whale swallowing Jonah. So simple-minded is he that he throws the burden of disproof upon the sceptic. He claims the right to hold that Eve was seduced by a serpent until he is "shown that the Devil could not have employed a snake for such a purpose." Now, a very little physiology would soon "show" him this. Serpents are not endowed with a talking apparatus, and all the devils in hell could not make them use organs which they do not possess.

It is taken for granted by Mr. Alcock that Adam and Eve existed as individuals, and were the first parents of mankind. But a multitude of his clerical brethren would tell him that he is mistaken. Adam and Eve are legendary or mythological figures. Thousands of years before they were created, according to the Bible chronology, countries like Egypt were inhabited by millions of civilised men and women. Nor is it conceivable by an Evolutionist that the human race proceeded from a single family. Those who ask "Who were the first parents of mankind?" are hopelessly behind the science of the present age. They do not understand the elementary principles of Evolution.

Let us assume, however, for the sake of argument, that the Bible story of the Fall is really true. In that case, we say it is perfectly puerile. Mr. Alcock says that Adam and Eve existed "in a state of childlike innocence." But what he means is childlike *ignorance*, for he afterwards says that "we" cannot help "loving" evil, and on this theory children are infected with what is called original sin. Suppose we take Mr. Alcock's word for it that Adam and Eve had "no evil inclinations." If that were true, it would have been impossible for them to "go wrong." They might have made mental mistakes, but they could not have been guilty of vice, crime, or sin; for it is indisputable that an external "temptation" has no force except in relation to an internal tendency. All their Maker had to do was to leave them alone in their "innocence." But he did not do this. He set a trap for them. They fell into it in their ignorance, and their benevolent Creator, who has no First Offenders' Act in his jurisprudence, gave them penal servitude for life—to say nothing of their dangers after death—for a single indiscretion.

After asserting the "innocence" of Adam and Eve, and their being without any "evil inclinations," Mr. Alcock states that their sin was "deliberate." We beg him to reconcile these apparent contradictions.

God is said to be omniscient. He knows everything, even before it happens. He was perfectly aware of the inevitable consequence when he put Adam and Eve to the "test." Was it not, then, a cruel farce? A father who *knew* that his boy would steal a shilling would be wicked if he deliberately left one in the boy's way.

"Felt dependence on the Creator" is one of those soothing phrases of which Christian preachers have an abundance. Adam and Eve, we are told, set God at defiance, by eating his forbidden apples. They committed the crime of rebellion. But why did not God try to govern them through their reason? Forbidding a thing does not necessarily make it immoral. We cannot be said to do wrong, morally speaking, unless we know that our action will inflict injury on others. Mere obedience is not in itself a virtue, although it becomes so when we perceive the social grounds of its necessity.

Mr. Alcock is puzzled by what Paul called the war in our members. We do not agree with him that men have a special "love" for sin. We regard the statement as a gross libel on human nature. But we do admit that men have "contradictory instincts"—or rather impulses which are sometimes in opposition to each other. Mr. Alcock explains this fact by the theory that man is fallen. We explain it by the theory that man has risen. And our theory has the advantage over his of being countenanced—nay, demonstrated—by science. There is no "mystery" in this matter to the Evolutionist. We have all descended physically, and ascended morally, from savage progenitors, as they in turn descended (and ascended) from still more brutal ancestors. By the law of heredity, their natures are still powerful within us; and by the laws of conscience and civilisation, we are under a contrary pressure from collective humanity. The selfish instincts come into collision with the social instincts; and moral progress consists in the growing subordination of the former to the latter.

G. W. FOOTE.

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Christ on the Stage.

So the Ober-Ammergau performances are doomed! That is to say, there will be no repetition of them next year if a certain section of the Evangelical Church can have their way. But as it is not at all likely that these objectors can carry their desires into effect next year or for some years to come, it is just possible that the Passion Play will be continued a little longer—probably till it ceases to pay. When it does die the natural death of all survivals of mediæval superstition, no sane person is likely to shed many tears. The world will go on, even in the holiday season, just as well without it. Some other and possibly better excuse will be found for an excursion to the same or adjacent regions, and the pious humbug of the present pilgrimages will be spared.

There was a proposal a little time ago to bring the peasants to this country, so that they might give performances of their play at the Royal Aquarium. But it seems to have been thought by enterprising *entrepeneurs* that the representation of Christ on the cross, even when redeemed by the buffoonery of a farcical Judas Iscariot, would hardly "take" like a wild and woolly west or a South African show, and there is just now a probability that the Mongolian will be the best card to play for public peep shows.

Meantime the passion displayed by the Evangelicals over this passion play is more than a little diverting. "Blasphemous" is the mildest term they apply to it. "Horribly profane," "a mixture of hideous farce and sickening crudities," "abominably irreverent and indecent," are other expletives used. The curious thing is that this Ammergau play has been given for goodness knows how many years past, and not until quite recently has any objection been raised to it on the ground of coarseness or profanity. It is but a survival of the ancient "mysteries," and of those "miracle plays" which became extinct in this country after the accession of Queen Elizabeth. The "devils" who figured in these performances were indeed open to criticism. They supplied the comic element in the sacred tragedies; and their jests were of the most irreverent character, but were always received with manifestations of delight. "Whenever," says a Christian writer, "a crowd of people were represented—in the Deluge when Noah is preparing his ark, or at the sacred scenes in the New Testament history—the writer of the 'mystery' introduced us to the language and thoughts of the lowest of the mediæval rabble. Sometimes these plays were enacted on a stage of three compartments—the uppermost representing heaven, the middle earth, and the lowest hell. The more horrible the latter was the better the spectators were pleased." The Coventry plays are said to have included the most revolting representations of the Deity, which may be readily understood if the writers followed literally on the lines of the Old Testament portraiture.

But we have grown out of the tone and spirit of these early religious plays, with their odd mixture of the sacred and profane, of piety and levity, of devotion and coarse pleasantry. And we have—or rather the Evangelical section referred to have—become so extremely superfine and sensitive that the annual performances of the guileless peasants at Ammergau, which are refinement itself as compared with those given in our country centuries ago, are now denounced as contrary to all notions of religious propriety, and as irreverent displays that ought to be sternly put down. It is said that the "most sacred events during the passion days of our Lord, even His prayers, His agony, His crucifixion, and dying words, are reproduced as a 'performance,' a veritable 'show' of a most sensational character, exhibited for a money payment."

Certainly some of the descriptions which have appeared of the latest show suggest a conscientious endeavor to give a realistic representation of New Testament incidents. Christ, in shaded crimson robes, comes on the stage seated on an ass led by the adoring disciple John. Every effort is taken to prevent any similarity to the circus jester of our childhood who, with white and carmine-covered cheeks, used to make his *entree* similarly mounted. The entrance of Christ is said to be "heart-thrilling." Somebody who, as it were, discharges the function of ringmaster asks, "Art Thou the Messiah?" Then come in answer the "clear brave words," *Du sagst es, ich bin es* (You say so, I *am*). This, we are told, "goes like a lance through brain and heart." Why it should do so does not quite appear. If he comes on as the Messiah, naturally he would say he was the Messiah when interrogated. What else would you expect? They have a new Christus now, the other one having died of some ordinary vulgar complaint which would destroy all the idealism if it were mentioned. The *Abend Mahl* (Last Supper) is said to be most sacredly and solemnly given. The Gethsemane scene is "terrible." Judas, we are told, is a torture throughout. Nevertheless, he supplies the farcical element, and "every time Judas appears the country people laugh and titter." The last scenes also are terrible—the scourging in the soldiers' hall, the scoffing of the rabble, and the Christus standing bound before Pilate. The Crucifixion is "terrible and prolonged." For eighteen minutes Christus is on the cross which makes the hearts of all, like Magdalen's, "hang there too."

> "*It is awful!* the face of the dying Christus, the words he spake, 'in a [loud] voice,' *Es ist Vollbracht, Vater, in deine Hande empfehle ich meinen Geist.* The roll of thunder and sudden darkness gives intense relief.....*All this would be impossible, impious, did we not know the people here.* They are not only brought up to it, but *born for it.* Johannes' little child, scarce two years old, is in two *tableaux.* And the Christus! He is exceptional, extraordinary. With his marvellous ability and beauty, he is like a child—a simple child *that would fain become a monk.* The play of these devout artists is their *form of worship*, and they willingly speak of it in their simple and beautiful language."

Now this is the sort of thing presented year after year in the past, not only without a word of protest, but with absolute eulogy as a perfect Christian art picture. Present-day Evangelicals profess themselves amazed at the blasphemous mockery. Whilst they pity the ignorant peasants who take part in the spectacle, they are excited to the utmost abhorrence of the miserable priestcraft which encourages such an abomination, and by implication the tourists who travel thither and pay to witness it.

The crusade against the Ober-Ammergau performances seems to be developing. The *Morning Post* has led the way with a series of hysteric criticisms, and a well-known ecclesiastic is widely distributing "A Protest and a Plea." But what does the opposition amount to? It simply means that present-day Christians feel that they cannot survive the presentation in a concrete form, on a stage with living actors, of the Gospel incidents which form the basis of their faith. It is not a question whether the representation is accurate or inaccurate—the probability is that it approaches as near as can be to the reality as it may be imagined by simple minds. It is enacted by peasants, and Christ and his disciples were of the peasant class. But, curiously enough, these modern Christians, though they can endure the story as presented in paintings and partially in sculpture, seem to altogether fight shy of it in the form of stage representation. It shocks them, mainly because it is so calculated to engender unbelief. The Gospel story is very well to read with pious eyes, and meditate upon with devout adoration, but dramatised—well, that is quite a different thing. Somehow, the incidents sink into their proper proportion, and, shall we say, into comparative insignificance?

One of the religious weeklies, discussing the subject and denouncing the Ammergau play, enlarges, as all Christians seem to find a delight in enlarging, upon the "terrible agony" of Christ prior to and during his crucifixion. But if that tragedy occurred, in what way does it differ from an untold number of tragedies in which the agony must have been equally great? How many heretics have been tortured and burnt at the stake in the name of this very Christ? Is it to be supposed that they suffered less than he? Some of them exhibited infinitely greater intrepidity. Crucifixion was the form of capital punishment at the time when he is said to have died. Two persons—thieves, it is said—were crucified with him. Nobody ever seems to think of them. Their agony was probably quite as great as his. Why is the sympathy of the centuries and of the world

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all centred on Christ, who is by no means the only example we have of a man dying, as he believed, in the cause of truth and for the benefit of the world?

FRANCIS NEALE.

What is a Secular Reformer?

IN considering the answer which should be given to the above question it is really necessary to have a distinct idea of the sense in which those who use the term employ it. Where this idea does not exist misapprehension is likely to obtain upon the subject. During my journalistic career of forty years I have frequently designated prominent men secular reformers, and for so doing have sometimes been taken severely to task. It is supposed that there is a marked difference between a secular and a social reformer, and perhaps, as the two terms are popularly understood, there is some justification for the supposition. But practically, so far as their objects are concerned, the two phrases represent the same thing. One may not go quite so far as the other upon certain subjects, and their methods may vary; but both aim to improve the mundane conditions of society, and both rely for success in their efforts for reform upon human agencies, not upon alleged supernatural teachings. Two great social reformers, Robert Owen and Charles Dickens, employed nothing but secular means in their endeavors to ameliorate societarian conditions. The former boldly repudiated belief in "all the religions of the world," and the latter, being a Unitarian, avoided orthodox Christianity in his attempts to remedy the abuses of his time. In the proper sense of the word, Dickens was a secular reformer; that is, in his reformatory work orthodox theology had no part. Those of his characters noted for their noble generosity and their love for mankind are not religious; whilst those remarkable for their professions of piety are heartless individuals, working evil for their own selfish ends. In *Pickwick* the deputy shepherd is made the representative of a class, and not an exceptional individual, as an orthodox writer would have described him. Stiggins is a most unmitigated rascal and a pious, canting hypocrite, to be abhorred and detested by all honest men and women. Then the portrait of Uriah Heap, that very "'umble" person, is little less than a burlesque of the orthodox professions of humility. The immortal Pecksniff shows that professions of piety and rascality can go hand in hand.

The Secular organisation must not, however, be confounded with individual propaganda. For instance, a member of the National Secular Society may hold views upon the various social topics of the day which are not enunciated in the Society's official programme. He is quite consistent in expounding such views, if he think they tend to human improvement; but he does so as an individual social reformer, whose desire to do good has been evoked by his Secular philosophy. Take Socialism, Individualism, and Anarchism; although the object in each case may be the same—namely, social advancement—the members of each differ in their method of seeking to obtain their object; still, all of them adopt means drawn from secular, not ecclesiastical, sources. A Secular reformer acts upon the belief that theological errors lie at the root of our social evils, and therefore he aims at removing those errors, leaving others to adopt what plans they consider best to eradicate the social evils. But it must not be overlooked that in every instance where reforms have been won the victory has been secured by secular, not theological, agencies. Further, a Secular reformer is one who recognises only that as being socially useful which tends to the physical, mental, moral, and political improvement of mankind as members of the general commonwealth. Considerations about matters that are said to transcend the province of reason, and that make the business of this life merely of secondary importance, the Secular reformer deems to be, at the most, only of theoretical interest, and of no real service in the social struggle in which society is at present engaged.

Whatever minor differences as to *method* may obtain among avowed Secular and Social reformers, there is one thing that ought always to be remembered—namely, that, in pursuing our own good in our own way, we should strive not to unnecessarily damage the interests of others. Freedom of thought, of speech, and of action for all is a claim consistent with reason, and essential to human progress. The point here to be insisted upon is, that the exercise of personal liberty, which does not infringe upon the freedom of others, is the right of all, without any regard to class distinctions. This principle the Secular reformer maintains, without committing himself to all that is taught in the exercise of that right. If it is asked how true freedom is to be distinguished from that which is false, the answer will be that every individual should be free to give expression to his thoughts; but whether or not such thoughts represent that which will prove beneficial to society must be tested by comparison, and by fair and open discussion. Above all, the Secular reformer is thoroughly opposed, under the present conditions of society, to all violence which tends to the destruction of persons and property. Such conduct indicates either insanity or uncontrolled passion, instead of a clear insight into the causes of social advancement. Possibly in times past it might have been necessary; but the people did not then possess the means for redressing wrongs that they have at their command to-day. In the past they were kept down by a domineering Church and a despotic Government, and all political rights were withheld from the masses. Now the Church has lost its former power, and governments must "assume a virtue if they have it not." Besides, the people, although they have not all the political power that is their due, have sufficient to enable them, if they use what they possess wisely, to obtain further reforms in a peaceful manner.

One of the best of social reformers was Robert Owen, and no one can accurately deny that he was always actuated by the desire to enhance the secular welfare of mankind. For energy, pure intentions, self-sacrifice, and a fervent wish to augment the happiness of others, he cannot be surpassed by any of the world's benefactors. Yet, as I recently stated in these columns, Owen was a most determined antagonist to the errors of the Christian faith. For making this statement I have been called to account by, I presume, a Christian admirer of the great philanthropist. In a courteously written letter to me, Mr. E. E. Kitchener, of Clapham, writes:—

> "When you claim him [Robert Owen] to be a Secular teacher, and a determined and outspoken antagonist to the errors of the Christian faith, are you not making gross misrepresentations? Nowhere in Owen's works or reported words have I found any attack on the accepted Christianity of the country.....He published in later years his own personal ideas of the Deity."

I have already explained in this article in what sense I apply the term "Secular teacher" to reformers of the type of the founder of the "Rational System of Society." As to my alleged "gross misrepresentations" of Owen's antagonism to the errors of Christianity, my correspondent is in error. Of course, *he* might not have found the report of such in the writings of Owen, but that may be his (my correspondent's) misfortune. The antagonism is recorded more than once "in Owen's works or reported words." It appears that the extracts I gave from the *New Moral World* were not sufficient to convince Mr. Kitchener of the correctness of my statement in reference to Owen's antagonism "to the errors of the Christian faith." It will, therefore, be a pleasure to me to furnish additional proof of the truth of my allegation. Here it is. Robert Owen said:—

> "The mythologies of the Pagans, the mysteries of the Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, and all the sacred and theological writings of Pagans, Hindoos, Christians, and Jews, were of no value—nay, instead of real value, they were the greatest evils existing among men, for they deranged or destroyed all the superior faculties and feelings of the human race, and made man, as he is at this day, more irrational than any animal of the creation.....He [Robert Owen] did not stand pledged to prove the follies of the Christian religion apart from other religions; to him they all appeared the same in principle and in general practice.....He believed that all the religions of the world were founded in error—the Christian religion was included in the word *all*." ("Debate on the Evidences of Christianity," between Mr. Owen and the Rev. Mr. Campbell in America, pp. 399, 336).

Mr. Owen repeated the same thing again and again in his debate at Reading with the Rev. W. Legg, B.A.;

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and also in the *New Moral World* (see pp. 129 and 194).

As to Owen's "personal ideas of the Deity," they had no reference to the Christian's, or any other personal God. His (Owen's) notion was that in nature there is an "incomprehensible power" that is "yet unknown to man." Of a personal Deity and a personal Devil he wrote in the *New Moral World* thus:—

> "There is not one single fact known to man, after all the experience of past generations, to prove that any such personalities exist, or ever did exist; and, in consequence, all the mythologies of the ancients, and all the religions of the moderns, are mere fanciful notions of men, whose imaginations have been cultivated to accord with existing prejudices, and whose judgments have been systematically destroyed from their birth."

Innumerable citations could be given from the writings and speeches of Owen to justify my statement that he was opposed to the errors of *all* the religions of the world, and that he made no exception in the case of Christianity. But I hope the evidence I have adduced will be sufficient to satisfy Mr. Kitchener and others as to the opinion of Robert Owen upon the folly and inutility of all the supernatural (so-called) religions of the world.

CHARLES WATTS.

Christian Endeavor.

ON Saturday last, after a preliminary day spent entirely in prayer, "The World's Convention of Christian Endeavor" opened its meetings at the Alexandra Palace. Although not quite so large as the clergyman imagined who prayed the other day for the three million and a half of "Christian Endeavorers" who would soon be coming to London, the gathering bids fair to leave nothing to be desired in the shape of quantity. There are to be many thousands of members, unlimited praying and preaching by a number of clergymen, amongst whom will figure Mr. Sheldon, of Topeka, Kansas, U.S.A., a gentleman who performed the almost impossible task of writing a book without a single decent sentence in its three hundred dreary pages.

"The Christian Endeavor" movement is of comparatively recent growth, and its object, as defined by one writer, is to induce its members to lead a Christ-like life, and carry the principles of Christianity into the ordinary affairs of life. So far as can be gathered from the published reports of the proceedings, prospective and retrospective, the only typical piece of Christ-like work was the day spent in prayer at Wesley's Chapel. With the praying the desire to be "Christ-like" seems to have come to an abrupt termination. When Jesus was about to undertake any important spiritual work, he fasted for many days. True, he fasted by himself, and there was no committee by to watch the proceedings. Still, he fasted. The Christian Endeavorers, on the contrary, make elaborate preparations for feasting. A whole army of refreshment caterers have been engaged, and the consumption of mineral waters promises to be abnormal. When a London clergyman was told that Mr. Sheldon was coming to England in one of the Cunard liners, his remark was: "Dear me, I should have thought he would have walked across." And one would have thought that the Convention provided an admirable chance for something in the loaves-and-fishes line, for the discomfort of unbelievers and the greater glory of the faithful.

There is also a corps of medical attendants engaged to look after any cases of sickness that may arise. This is the unkindest cut of all. Instead of "endeavoring" to give the world an object-lesson in the value of the promise of Jesus that all things should be granted to those who believe and pray, of the power of faith to work miracles, or of the benefit of calling in a few dozen of the assembled parsons and letting them cure the sick by "the prayer of faith," doctors are engaged, physic is prepared, and the Scriptures are allowed to go by the board. And this is what they call "translating Jesus into ordinary life"! Of course, it is only what one might expect. When a Christian talks of imitating Jesus, he seldom means more than reading into some of his reputed utterances as much of current common sense as is possible, and conveniently dropping all such as are hopelessly impracticable. Such an expression is only another instance of the general hypocrisy into which people are forced when they attempt to guide their lives by ancient records and outworn ideals. And from this point of view the "Christian Endeavor" movement is interesting enough.

One of the daily papers noted as a piece of novelty that the usual notice, "Beware of pickpockets," has been transformed into "Pickpockets beware." Beware of what? Of whom? Of God? Of Hell? Well, if these were all they had to dread, one might venture to predict that the light-fingered fraternity would be well represented at the Convention. Once at rest concerning the terrestrial "Bobby," the average pickpocket would chance the celestial one. And as for hell, most are like the highlandman, who, being reminded by an old lady, from whom he had stolen enough cloth to make a coat, that he would pay for it at the day of judgment, retorted that it was such long credit he might as well take enough for a waistcoat at once. But the joke is that pickpockets are to beware because the Convention has made elaborate preparations for their detection and punishment. Which is their way of commenting on the texts enjoining non-resistance to evil, turning one cheek when the other is smitten, and giving one's cloak to the man who had stolen one's coat.

What, after all, is likely to be the result of such a gathering, or what will result from the movement it represents? From the Christian point of view, practically nothing. The three million and a half members it claims are not recruited from the non-Christian world, nor do they exert the slightest influence upon it. They are gathered from the various Christian bodies, and, while receiving a new religious label, the Christian world remains as it was. Like the converts of the missionaries in India, who by getting converted at a number of different mission stations—at so much per month—finally reach Europe in a score of different reports, the "Christian Endeavorer" is only a duplication of the ordinary Church member. But the world of non-Christian or anti-Christian feeling goes on absolutely untouched by any such parades, and increasing in spite of them. There is small cause, therefore, for much of the self-gratulation one has been reading concerning the growth of the movement. Our converts *are* converts in the full sense of the term. They have been brought to take an entirely different view of life, and represent so much loss to the Christian community as a whole. But this and similar bodies are merely re-arrangements of existing Christians, and often enough a few are dropped in the shuffle.

And if the Christian Endeavor movement does not portend any increase in the numerical strength of Christianity, it certainly does not promise any permanent social benefit. People learn but slowly, or they would surely have recognised ere this that, if these religious revivals could accomplish anything at all, the world would have been saved long since. From the days of Wesley, at least, we have had enormous revivals that were going to revolutionise society and usher in the Millennium. They have appeared, run their course, and left the world as it was, or at most saddled with the presence of a new sect. Not long since the enormous sales of Mr. Sheldon's book—surely the most pitiful production that was ever dignified by such a name—sent the religious world into ecstasies, and wonderful results were promised from its large circulation. That boom has died out, and the world remains as it was, richer only by the possession of some scores of sermons that it could easily have spared. It is in the nature of things that the promoters of any movement should anticipate from it wonderful results; but at least one would expect that, as the outcome of frequent disillusionment in this direction, people would begin to see the plain teaching that the world requires something more than mere religious vaporing to solve its problems or to heal its woes. Social problems are not to be solved by any fantastical speechifying concerning the saving power of belief in Christ, nor by vague yearnings after a higher religious life—yearnings which usually produce a parade of self-righteousness, far more disgusting than anything that it displaces.

What, to take only one instance of these religious movements, has the Salvation Army accomplished in the way of contributing to a solution of social problems?

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Practically nothing. A hungry man here and there has his immediate wants relieved, a woman here and there is lifted from a life of degradation; but, meanwhile, the same agencies are busily engaged producing others to take their place. And what do any of the religious bodies effect in the way of destroying these agencies? Again, nothing. Worse than nothing even, for, while there is no attempt made by any of these religious revivals to seriously consider and attempt the removal of the causes of the evils their charities are designed to palliate, the mere distribution of charity serves in a manner to keep the public mind quiet. We give nearly thirty millions annually to religion, and thank God for the kindness of human nature because we get a few thousands back in questionable charity. We withdraw 50,000 men from productive pursuits, and consider we are well repaid because a sermon here and there is preached dealing with social reforms that the clergy are not strong enough to resist. We subscribe huge sums to numberless religious organisations, and meanwhile trades unions are driven to pass special resolutions protesting against the scandalously low wages paid those engaged in the manufacturing of "Holy Bibles." Strike a balance between the good done by religious organisations and the evils they perpetuate, and I have little doubt that the latter will far outweigh the former.

The Rev. Silvester Horne, remarking the large membership of the "Christian Endeavor" movement, triumphantly observed that "No secular society has ever accomplished such triumphs." It may be so, but, if it is so, the fact reflects little credit on the influence of Christianity in the past. That no movement for the betterment of human life here could bring such a number of people into combination is in itself a sufficient proof of how little Christianity has attended to the social side of human life. And the pity of it is that facts give the statement at least a colorable air of truth. It is a grim commentary upon the claims put forward on behalf of the civilising power of Christianity that there should be needed a society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It is still more grim that there should be taken in hand every year nearly 30,000 children; but grimmest of all is the fact that the Society finds it a matter of extreme difficulty to raise the few thousands annually required for its work, while huge sums are raised with comparative ease for purely religious objects. It may be that Christians cannot be brought to combine for secular purposes, but a clergyman might at least have the decency not to boast of the circumstance.

It is by no means an insignificant feature of the movement that its members are chiefly young men and women. In this journal a few weeks ago, reviewing the statistics compiled by Professor Starbuck in his *Psychology of Religion*, I pointed out the close connection between the ages of conversion and the period of puberty. These two sets of phenomena run together so closely that it is impossible to refrain from seeing the nature of the connection between them. It is at puberty that the organism is in process of rearrangement; it is more mobile then than at any other period of its career, it is more likely to be affected or attracted by any exciting influence it may encounter; and it is surely undesirable that at this stage the growing social sympathies should be directed into the channel of religious vaporing, instead of being trained to take a healthy human interest in a healthy human life.

The *Daily News*, in a special article on the Convention, observes: "It is really no use for sceptics to sniff and snort at a movement on so imposing a scale as this." Perhaps not, but if the sceptic does treat the movement seriously it is not because he is impressed by either its intellectual or moral worth, but because there is here such a serious misdirection of human energy as to demand the closest and most serious attention. That young men and women should feel some desire to participate in a larger life than that of their own individuality is in every way admirable. But that this fresh, healthful feeling should be exploited in the services of a demoralising supernaturalism is one of the saddest features of these movements. It is this fact that makes such movements of importance not to the sceptic merely, but to all who value the welfare of the race.

C. COHEN.

The Sacred Seventh.

GOD blessed the seventh day and "sanctified" it. For this reason, according to the fourth commandment, men are to work six days and rest on the seventh. Orthodox writers like Mr. Gladstone regard this as the first institution of the Sabbath. The more sagacious Paley saw the unanswerable objections to this view. There is not the slightest allusion to the Sabbath in the lives of the patriarchs, nor during the captivity in Egypt, and had it been known such a silence would be "unaccountable." Precisely the same argument, however, may be turned against Paley's position that the Sabbath was instituted in the wilderness. It is never alluded to during the rule of the Judges and the reign of the Kings before the captivity in Babylon. Indeed, the very language of the fourth commandment is conclusive on this point. The reference to "the stranger within thy gates" proves that the law was not given to desert nomads, but to a people dwelling in fenced cities. Nor *could* the Sabbath have arisen among nomads. Except when they shift their tents, and travel to fresh pastures, they have only to sit and watch their flocks. One day is exactly like another, and a day of rest in such circumstances is unintelligible. A periodic day of rest could only arise in an industrial civilisation where its necessity was obvious. And that the day of rest, whatever it was, should be associated with mythical events was inevitable, when every part of life was under a religious sanction.

Intervals of rest and recreation were common. The Egyptians had periodic holidays. On the festal days in Greece the shops and courts were closed, and the slaves rested from their labors. In Rome every ninth day was a holiday for all classes. The Persians had similar holidays. Even in Mexico the Spaniards found certain days set apart for idleness. In China the holidays are the new and full moon. In India there are prescribed days on which the superstitious Hindu dare not even clean his teeth.

The seven-days week was well known to the ancient Egyptians, who called the days after the seven planets. This practice spread from Egypt into the Roman Empire. Among the Greeks the seventh day was sacred as early as the times of Homer and Hesiod. It is also affirmed by Davis that the Hindus had a week of seven days named after the planets, and this is corroborated by Colebrooke.

The sacredness of the number seven, in so many parts of the world, sprang out of natural reasons. Moon-worship precedes sun-worship because man's attention is excited by the changeable rather than the regular. Now it was discovered that the full lunation occupied twenty-eight days. That was called a month—or moonth, and everyone knows that the lunar month comes before the solar or calendar month. Indeed, to this very day, the prisoners in English jails call a month "a moon." Well, the twenty-eight days being halved, the result was fourteen. That number was halved again, and the result was seven. But this number could not be halved or divided in any way; it was indivisible and mysterious, and therefore sacred. Then there were the seven planets, from which, in Egypt, Babylon, and elsewhere, the days were named; and this greatly heightened the sacredness of the number. Behind this, even, there is something older and more vital, reaching to the roots of culture. Among savages the covering of the generative organs is often neglected by the males, but scarcely ever among the females. That covering was the beginning of decency, and it arose from the fact of menstruation. Now the sexual periodicities throughout the whole animal world, including the human race, run in seven days or multiples of seven days. Let this truth be connected with the indivisible quarter of the moon's total phases and the number of the planets, and you have an importance, a mystery, and, therefore, a sacredness attaching to the number seven which could hardly attach to any other number. This is the reason why the number seven appears and reappears in religious systems. It is found among savages, and among the European votaries of oriental mysticism who talk of the seven-fold nature of man. Thus, religion is like the mythical snake of eternity. Extremes meet; the head and the tail are united.

—*From "Bible Romances" (The Creation Story), by* G. W. FOOTE.

The True Liberal.

The true "liberal" endeavors to use the means at his disposal in effecting all the good he can. But he guards against attacking, with fire and sword, evils which are often unavoidable—striving by judicious progress to correct obvious defects without destroying an equal amount of good by violent measures. He rests contented, in this imperfect world of ours, with the "good," until time and circumstances favor the attainment of the "better."—*Goethe.*

The flatterers of kings and princes have ever been held in deserved hatred and contempt. In this country they seem nearly to have had their day; but their successors, the courtiers of the people, are equally contemptible, and much more pernicious.—*Thomas Walker.*

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Acid Drops.

No news but ill news from China. It seems pretty certain that all the Europeans in Pekin have been massacred, except perhaps the women and children, who were probably slain by the men in order to save them from falling into the hands of Chinese torturers. Altogether it is a very shocking business. But, after all, the Christian Powers must bear their share of the responsibility. They have allowed their missionaries to affront Chinese prejudices in the most flagrant manner. They have been insolent and brutal towards the Chinese government. They have stolen piece after piece of Chinese territory, and it looked as though every good port on the Chinese coast would soon be in the hands of foreigners. Moreover, in their jealousy of each other, the Christian Powers have been drilling the Chinese to fight, and supplying them with guns, rifles, ammunition, and battleships. And now the childlike and bland Celestials are wielding all these warlike resources against the "foreign devils" who supplied them. It is a tragedy, but it is also a comedy.

Sir George Goldie, after travelling for several months in the interior of China, has been interviewed in London by a representative of the *Daily News*. He says that the Chinese, as a rule, are "most courteous to individual travellers." But he adds that they "do not want us or our customs, or, above all, our religion." "This last," he declares, "is the main grievance, and has been so for a century." He affirms that "their code of ethics is as high as ours." But their religion of ancestor-worship cannot co-exist with Christianity, the two faiths being "essentially and necessarily antagonistic." This is well known to the missionaries, who are quite aware of the terrible prejudice they are creating against Europeans in China.

The editorial columns of the *People* have brightened up since the accession of Mr. Joseph Hatton as editor. The leader this week on "The Christian Lesson of Peking" is specially worth reading. Mr. Hatton says: "It is not to be wondered at that sceptical critics are inclined to regard Christianity as a failure in presence of the disasters that are the outcome of its campaign of preaching, and the terrible deeds that have been done in its name." Mr. Hatton thinks it an open question whether it is worth while to preach Christianity to the Chinese. "Anyhow, whether the missionaries are doing good or not in Oriental countries whose people were civilised and had a fine system of ethics when we were naked savages, the material cost is heavy on us, and the story of our few successes is red with the blood of a multitude of victims—among them many of our best citizens and our bravest troops."

Writing on the Chinese trouble, the *Rock* says: "It is mainly on account of our missions that the subject is deeply interesting to us." Yes, the missions will be found to have been mainly the cause of all that has occurred. Lord Salisbury saw it, and practically said so some weeks ago.

The most popular figure, apparently, amongst the Christian Endeavorers who are camping in Alexandra Park, North London, is the Rev. Mr. Sheldon, the author of that trashy book called *In His Steps*. Mr. Sheldon is preaching a very "high-toned" morality. He is telling people what they ought to do in business, and how scrupulous they should be in telling the truth and giving their customers the advantage, when there is any, instead of taking it themselves. One tradesman said to Mr. Sheldon: "If I did all that you tell me, I should be a martyr." "Very well," the preacher replied, "be a martyr." But that is very cheap advice, especially when the preacher has a nice pleasant job, with a nice snug salary, and various pickings in addition. Mr. Sheldon is a great believer in martyrdom—for other people; and is terribly exacting in the matter of other men's duties.

It is positively amusing to hear men of God like Mr. Sheldon holding forth to men at least as honest as themselves on the virtue of veracity. Why, the ministers of religion are the biggest liars on earth. More than half of them don't believe fifty per cent. of what they preach; others don't believe twenty-five per cent., and some don't believe ten per cent. All through history their profession has been the most dishonest and hypocritical. They have always bamboozled children in order to live upon the labor of adults.

By the way, these Christian Endeavorers are pretty well narrowing Christianity down to an attitude towards alcohol. But what humbug this is! They talk by the hour about following Jesus, who was far from being a teetotaller; in fact, he drank whatever was going, and on one occasion presented a huge quantity of wine to the half-fuddled guests at a wedding festival. Those who read Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer* will perceive the utter absurdity of pretending that Christianity is a "temperance" religion. There *is* a teetotal religion in the world, but it was not founded by Jesus of Nazareth. It was founded by the "infidel" Mohammed.

Mr. Sheldon wouldn't take a glass of wine with Jesus, nor would he smoke a cigar with Spurgeon. All such indulgences should be sternly repressed. There should also be no theatres, no music-halls, and, indeed, no entertainments of any kind except in churches and chapels, where Mr. Sheldon and his brethren in the Lord are the professional caterers.

Dr. Clifford spent last Sunday in Mr. Sheldon's company, and he says it was "a heaven on earth." Very likely. What was the *menu*?

One Endeavorer has been endeavoring too much. A well-dressed woman, named Caroline E. Keyes, who said she had come to England to represent a Minnesota church, pleaded guilty at the Marylebone Police-court to stealing a gold watch, bracelet, and clothing from the Norfolk Mansions Hotel, Wigmore-street. Her explanation was that she had been drinking brandy and was unconscious of her acts. But there was a good deal of method in her inebriation, for the stolen articles were found concealed in her trunk.

Even "gentle Jesus" must get savage at times. In his little earthly career, recorded in the Gospels, he broke out on more than one or two occasions. Several times he used language calculated to provoke a breach of the peace. His temper even carried him away into disorderly conduct. He drove out tradespeople from the Temple who had just as much right to be there as he had. Assuredly, if his violence had been exhibited in the present day, he would have been hailed before a magistrate and fined 5s. or 10s., with the alternative of seven days. But now he is sitting serenely at the right hand of his Father, who, curiously enough, is himself. There, he is just now listening to the Christian Endeavorers and a few millions of other pious folks. Of course he reads his *Rock*, and he learns from that print that, notwithstanding all his agony in Gethsemane and on Calvary, there are still about 800,000,000 heathens in the world, 300,000,000 Hindus, 250,000,000 Mohammedans, and only 140,000,000 Protestants. Roman Catholics don't count, according to the *Rock*; but they are only about 200,000,000. Taking Protestants and Catholics together, and leaving Mohammedans out of count, there are about 340,000,000 Christians against 800,000,000 heathen, and 300,000,000 Hindus. If that is not enough to make "gentle Jesus" wild, what else in the way of statistics could possibly disturb him?

Three women went to Brighton on Monday with a "Mothers' Meeting" excursion from St. John's Church, Drury-lane. But they did not return. The yacht in which they were taking a trip capsized, and they were drowned. Had they gone with the N. S. S. excursion to Brighton, they might have escaped this sad fate. A certain other party seems to be more watchful than "Providence" over the safety of his devotees.

The activity of the Lord's Day Observance Society is beyond dispute. The secretary of that Society assuredly earns his money, which can hardly be said of a number of other sectarian officials who draw handsome stipends and do practically nothing in return. This wide-awake secretary noticed that the Christian Endeavorers were going to discuss "The Day of Rest: its Necessity and Sanctity." That, of course, was a subject which commended itself to the secretary; but he observed that sermons were to be preached and meetings held at the Alexandra Palace *on the Lord's Day*. Thereupon he writes to the papers: "Unless purely local in character, these gatherings must promote Sunday travelling and other encroachments on the 'sanctity' and 'rest' of the day." The secretary adds that the Alexandra Palace is used to this sort of thing; but he hopes that Christian Endeavorers are not. The name of this vigilant secretary of a futile craze is Peake. It is worth while mentioning the name to avoid any confusion with that of old Mother Partington who undertook to mop back the waves of the Atlantic.

The Yarmouth Town Council have at length "caved in" on the question of Sunday trading. No longer are there to be any stupid prosecutions for selling fruit, oysters, and tobacco on Sundays. The Corporation has discovered that it is itself a Sunday trader by giving concerts of sacred music on the Wellington Pier and providing a band to play in the new Beach Gardens on the Sabbath. By eighteen votes to ten, it was resolved to instruct the Watch Committee to notify the chief constable that the prosecutions should cease.

The vicar of Llandrillo admits that he has had an awakening. He had heard a great deal from Sabbatarians in regard to the Sunday musical performances on the Pier and in the Victoria Pavilion. Like a sensible man, he went and personally investigated the subject for himself. Now he emphatically declares that Sunday evening concerts are

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decidedly a great boon. A weekly review regrets that other clergymen are not equally "commonsensible."

The Sabbatarians are going it (says the *Topical Times*). At Pontypridd they are trying to make a Jewish watchmaker keep two Sundays in one week. He was actually caught cleaning a watch on the seventh—or is it the first?—day of the week. To clean a watch must be almost as wicked as to wind one up. Cleanliness is proverbially next to godliness; but the *unco guid* seem to be making a dead-set at all varieties of cleanliness. You must not have your chin cleaned; you must not clean your watch. Shortly, at this rate, there will be a chance for a religion of dirt, with the justices as its high priests. Already, in some towns, you must eat stale fruit on Sunday because the Sabbatarians have closed all the greengrocers; and if you run out of tobacco, you must run into the public-house to buy more. And yet the silly old sea goes on washing the earth every day in the week, and drinking itself full from the unlicensed skies; while the sun continues (sometimes) to shine on his name-day, tidying up the lower air. I hope the Pontypridd Bench won't stop these things, or—well, there wouldn't be a Pontypridd Bench at all for long. And what would virtue do then, poor thing?

Canon Wilberforce, chaplain of the House of Commons, said the other day that until he had visited India he had always thought that kindness to animals "came in" with Christianity. Now he had found at a city in India the remains of a Buddhist hospital for animals established 300 years before Christ. And so the acquirement of elementary knowledge goes on.

A priest recently consecrated a bull ring at Barcelona. This seems to have been too much even for a Roman Catholic bishop. So he of Barcelona has published a pastoral letter expressing his strong disapproval of bull fights. Still, this particular ring has been blessed, and it is difficult to see how it can be *un*-blessed, especially if the Lord chooses to feel offended, as naturally he might.

"Divine calls" are not uncommon in the United States. An expatriated Englishman in Boston states that he got his "call" in his office in Basinghall Street in this unique manner:—"Suddenly I felt a force through my left side, which penetrated to the centre of my body; the force turned upward and came through my throat, and over my tongue, my body and face extending by the introduced power." Acting on his "call," he has addressed a letter to President McKinley, asking that the Sabbath should be observed on the seventh, and not on the first, day of the week. A further discovery he has made is that the beast referred to in the "Revelation" is no less than our old friend the House of Lords.

"Worms isn't man's work; they are an act of God," said a defendant in a Bow County Court action. After all, the notion of a Deity is useful; you can make him the peg to hang a great deal upon, even "worms."

Nine out of ten of the girls on the Liverpool streets are Romanists. So at least we learn from a veracious Protestant print, the name of which we need hardly say is the *Rock*.

There are indeed some credulous people about. A Miss Theresa O'Donnell, of Newtown Cunningham, County Donegal, is said to have shown a Miss McNulty letters from Heaven, signed "Your God," and authorising certain payments. She also announced the resurrection by the Pope of Miss McNulty's parents. Sixty pounds were extracted by these pious lies, and still the soothsayer is believed in.

Some pious person signing himself "A Missionary" writes complaining that last week £38 was collected for certain missionary work, and £22,000 was given by one man for four horses. Certainly the latter sum seems to be a large one to expend on four horses, but it must be remembered that it is necessary to keep up the breed, and that occasionally one has to pay a rather high figure to get the requisite "strain." As to the missionaries, the less said about them just now the better.

The author of *The Land of an African Sultan* confesses that he has a limited appreciation of missionaries. Writing of Morocco, he says: "It seems to be the fashion to try and raise the women from the only sphere they know, to try and Christianise the Moors, and introduce drink—in fact, by every means in our power to overthrow the social system of another country, in which we have no other interest than as an object of our philanthropy. If, instead, we would attempt to root out the seeds of evil that we Europeans have introduced into the country, then we might have some excuse for interfering with Morocco."

The author, Mr. Walter B. Harris, F.R.G.S. (Al Aissoui), says: "A solitary missionary or two spreading the doctrine of the equality of men and women does no good; no, he does much harm. It but impresses on the minds of the women a fact that till now they have been totally unaware of—namely, that to our ideas they are degraded, coarse, and of no intellect. A very little sets the Moorish mind on fire, and a woman who has once heard these words shapes her life accordingly; she tries it on and she fails, and, if troublesome, is removed by sale or by poison."

"I have written strongly," says Al Aissoui, "as I feel strongly—far more strongly than I write—on these questions. I have seen the work in many lands, and I have found one fact—that where missionaries go, goes also drink. Now allow that the Mohammedan religion is in every way inferior to ours—an allowance I do not make in every case of the tenets of the two, allowing for climatic differences—yet the Moors live in tolerable peace. Crime with them is not nearly so rife as crime with us. Now let us, for a moment only, Christianise the whole Moorish nation. What is the result? The natives let their hair grow instead of shaving their heads; the result is disease. They drink wine; the result is crime and drunkenness and death. They eat pork and suffer from scrofula, and other horrible diseases. In fact, in introducing Christianity as it now exists, or is supposed to exist, we would only be hurrying a fallen nation more quickly to its grave.....I say without hesitation, and after careful thought, that it will be an evil day for the Arabs and Moors if ever they become Christians."

The population of this country is increasing at the rate of 300,000 a year. Meantime the number of ordinations in the Church of England is decreasing steadily. The ordinations to the diaconate last year were 110 fewer than they were ten years ago. In the three years, 1885-1888, the total number of deacons ordained was 2,324. In the corresponding period, 1895-1898, it was only 1,924, the difference being 330. Meanwhile the population multiplies—and fails to weep.

The Church can't understand it. But folks with half an eye open can. The fool of the family no longer cares to enter the Church. He would sooner go as a "super" on the stage. Or write a book reconciling evolution with "revelation."

The *Church Times*, in common with other religious papers, feels called upon to recognise the comparatively small number of candidates for "holy orders" and their lack of ordinary scholastic attainments. The *Church Times* says: "Many bishops, no doubt, would gladly raise the standard of their examinations. Many would like to make more searching inquiry into the spiritual state of those whom they are asked to ordain. But the plain, unwelcome truth is that they cannot afford, in the present state of things, to be too particular. It is no light matter to reject any but the most flagrantly unfit, while the need for recruits is so overwhelming, and the number of recruits diminishes year by year."

Loughborough is in serious trouble. It has a workhouse with 100 inmates, and, shocking to say, no chaplain. The complaint does not come from the inmates. They don't care, not they; but somebody outside does. He hopes to be appointed chaplain with a stipend. If the Guardians appoint him, they will be guilty of an atrocious misapplication of public funds. There are a number of ministers who are prepared to give voluntary assistance. They are not really wanted by the inmates, but their services are cheap, and may be tolerated. But if the ratepayers permit a chaplain to be foisted on the 100 inmates, with probably a stipend of £150 a year, no word in the dictionary is equal to describing the job.

Mr. Henry Seymour forwarded to the Home Secretary a memorial containing some fifteen hundred signatures, praying for the release of R. B. D. Wells, who was sentenced by Mr. Justice Darling, at Birmingham, to twelve months' imprisonment for alleged obscenity. The memorial set forth various reasons, such as were advanced at the time in our columns, why this sentence should be regarded as unjust and a serious interference with free discussion. Sir Matthew White Ridley has returned the stereotyped answer that, having, etc., etc., he does not feel justified in recommending any reduction of the sentence. Of course not. Who thought he would? The official policy is always to keep a man in prison until you are forced to let him out.

Some years ago the Rev. Benjamin Waugh, secretary of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, encouraged the Bishop of Chester in saying that working-class Secularists were the worst ill-users of their offspring. It was an infamous falsehood, and Mr. Waugh afterwards took it back, though the Bishop never did. When a Bishop tells a lie he sticks to it. He can't afford to let people think he is ever mistaken.

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Mr. Waugh's Council has recently expressed its approval of Lord James of Hereford's Youthful Offenders' Bill, which provides for the whipping of juvenile delinquents. Whereupon the reverend gentleman is addressed in an open public letter by Mr. Joseph Collinson, on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Humanitarian League. "It is with deep regret," Mr. Collinson says, "that we find that the N. S. P. C. C. has expressed its approval of the objectionable clauses, the chief of which has for its object the extension of a cruel, indecent, and irrevocable punishment, while it has passed entirely over those which are really useful and humane." This is a case of the tables reversed with a vengeance!

In the *Freethinker* of June 24 there was an article by Mr. Foote on "Blank Atheism," with reference to some remarks of the late Mathilde Blind. That lady spoke of her rescue from the verge of "blank Atheism" by the influence of Buckle, and Mr. Foote said he did not understand this, as she certainly passed for an Atheist when he knew her, more than twenty years ago, and her friend, Professor Clifford, gloried in the designation of Atheist. "I cannot help thinking," Mr. Foote wrote, "that Mathilde Blind, writing perhaps in after years, when Clifford was dead, and the great Bradlaugh struggle had rendered 'Atheism' more odious than ever, used the word with that looseness which is only too common, but of which *she* ought not to have been guilty."

Will it be believed that anybody could construe this sentence as an insult to Charles Bradlaugh? We should not have thought it possible. Yet it has been done by Mrs. Bonner, who quotes eleven words, without the slightest reference to the context, and asks her readers to infer that Mr. Foote has deliberately aspersed her father's memory. She warmly denies that Charles Bradlaugh did anything to make Atheism odious. "This is the first time," she solemnly says, "that we have seen the suggestion made, and we trust that on reflection it is one which Mr. Foote himself would gladly abandon."

Certainly it would be gladly abandoned by Mr. Foote if he had ever made it. But he never did make it. Mrs. Bonner was really in too great a hurry. She saw her father's name, and her filial devotion was alarmed; and in that state of mind she had the misfortune to catch a false meaning. Mr. Foote did not say, or hint, that Bradlaugh had made Atheism more odious than ever. What he said was that "the great Bradlaugh struggle" had increased the odium of "Atheism." This last word was put within quotation marks, showing that the *word* was meant, in contradistinction to "Agnosticism," which Miss Blind apparently affected. Mr. Foote's obvious meaning was, to anyone who read his article calmly and impartially, that Miss Blind, like a good many other people, took to the word "Agnosticism" for essentially personal reasons. The word "Atheism" was always odious, and it became more so (as we think) after the great Bradlaugh struggle. At any rate, it was from that very time that "Agnosticism" became fashionable, and Agnostics took to sneering at Atheists as vulgar, dogmatic persons.

It was not Bradlaugh that made Atheism more odious than ever, but "the great Bradlaugh struggle." Bradlaugh was a giant in intellect and character, and Mr. Foote has said so a hundred times. He also had the honor of standing beside Bradlaugh (or *behind* him, if Mrs. Bonner prefers) during that struggle; and he said then, as he has said ever since, that Bradlaugh did not (as far as *he* knew) make a single mistake from beginning to end. This is not open to dispute, for Mr. Foote's words are in print, both in the *Freethinker* and in the *National Reformer*, and can be produced if necessary. Yes, Bradlaugh was always right, as he was always brave, in that great struggle. But there were other parties in the contest. Lord Randolph Churchill and the rest of them stirred up all the dregs of British and Irish bigotry, and until the ferment of fanaticism subsided the words "Atheism" and "Atheist" became a perfect abomination. Mrs. Bonner is, of course, free to think otherwise; but this is Mr. Foote's recollection of the period, and everyone must be guided by his own memory.

Bradlaugh died all too soon, but he lived long enough to win the respect even of the Tories in parliament. Before he took his seat, however, at the end of the great struggle, the Tories positively loathed him, and many of the Liberals who voted for his right to sit in the House of Commons did so reluctantly, and merely on principle, as men do what they cannot help although they regard it as supremely distasteful. No insult was too gross to fling at him, no lie was too flagrant to tell about him. The orthodox state of mind for several years was simply shocking. And just for the reason that religious bigotry was inflamed, a heightened odium was attached to "Atheism."

We are sorry that a few plain words of Mr. Foote's have required such a lengthy explanation, and sorrier still that Mrs. Bonner should have rendered it necessary. Mr. Foote does not intend to be drawn into any dispute with his old general's daughter, and if further misrepresentations should occur he will hardly feel called upon to notice them. He has a right to ask, once for all, that, as he always takes the trouble to express himself with tolerable clearness, his words may be allowed to bear their natural meaning. If he were a cryptic writer there might be some excuse for putting an alien significance into his sentences.

An Alnwick man of God, the Rev. J. J. M. Perry, has been preaching "an impressive sermon" on kindness to animals, in the course of which he said that "man in a state of nature is essentially a cruel animal." But is not man a cruel animal in a "state of grace"—that is to say, in a state of religion? The cruellest torturers in human history have been torturers in the name of God. There is no device for inflicting pain upon the human organism which has not been used by priests of the Christian religion. They employed the rack, the wheel, and the thumbscrew; they flayed people alive, cooked their feet in boiling oil, pressed in their ribs with heavy weights, dropped water upon their heads till they went mad, and did a multitude of other ingenious infamies. Yes, on the whole, we agree that Parson Perry, as a Christian minister, is an excellent authority on cruelty. It is a subject on which he should possess a vast deal of information.

It is said that Admiral Dewey's wife has left the Popish squad and gone next door to the Episcopalians. She is reported to have been first a Presbyterian, next an Episcopalian, then a Theosophist, then a Papist, and is now back to her second lodgings again. For variety the lady beats Mrs. Besant.—*Liberator* (Melbourne).

The Rev. F. Cooke, rector of Westbury Parish Church, Shropshire, had a quarrel with one of his parishioners, Mr. Rossall Sandford, and when that gentleman presented himself at the holy communion the angry man of God refused to let him have his share of the body and blood of Christ. Mr. Sandford is the son of a clergyman and the brother of a clergyman, and is reported to feel this slight "most keenly." The only party who says nothing, and who does not appear to be considered, is the one whose body and blood are passed round in the cannibalistic love-feast.

Under the heading of "Hints for the Home" the *South African News* gives a recipe for "Angels' Food," which our contemporary says is made with gelatine, milk, the yolk of eggs, and lemon juice. No doubt this is a very agreeable compound, but it is not Angels' Food. The Psalmist says that Angels' Food is manna. We daresay the *South African News* is an excellent paper, and a good authority on many things; but it seems to have an imperfect acquaintance (if any) with the Bible.

"The Decaying Curate" is the subject of a spicy article in the *Birmingham Daily Mail*. Our contemporary thinks the curate is a happy man while he fights shy of matrimony. As long as he is "eligible" he is bombarded with presents and attentions, the ladies of the parish gush over him, his "invertebrate sermons are voted as masterpieces of the English language, his figure is described as charming, and his expression in church is idolised." He is the pet of "simpering spinsters and maudlin matrons." But the moment he commits the crime of taking a wife, all his female idolaters treat him spitefully and say the nastiest things about him. Well, we suppose it is natural. The pious female has peculiar ways of her own.

Lord Salisbury is reported to have declined to take an umbrella to the Athenæum Club. "No, no," he said, "I've lost too many in the Athenæum. I cannot trust the Bishops."

Dr. Dambergis, Professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry in the University of Athens, has analysed the three sacred springs near the famous temple of Asklepius, the God of Healing, at Epidauras. It appears that the waters are alkaline, aud beneficial to patients suffering from gravel, stone, and diseases of the stomach. Cures were performed, not by the power of Asklepius, but by the medicinal virtue of the waters.

There are fifty-two beneficed clergy in the City of London. Thirty are absentees, residing "in the country or at the seaside," as the *Daily News* says. And why not? As long as the public are foolish enough to find the money, you can hardly quarrel with the men of God for keeping their boots free from the City dust.

Ninety degrees in the shade! Yes, and ninety-four in some places. We are getting it hotter and hotter every summer. Perhaps, though, it is a case of providential mercy. Maybe the Lord is preparing us by slow stages for the extra-tropical weather that prevails in our ultimate destination. Tempering the heat, so to speak, to the well-haired goats.

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N.B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stonecutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 22, at 7, Hyde Park: Freethought Demonstration.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—July 22, at 7, Hyde Park: Freethought Demonstration.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

A. H. T.—We have passed on your letter to Mr. Cohen, who will answer it in our next.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for the cuttings; also for your letter.

A. B. MOSS.—See "Sugar Plums." Glad to see you so interested in your work, but don't hurry up your funeral.

JAMES NEATE.—Thanks for your valued and encouraging letter. The Twentieth Century Fund will be dealt with at length in our next issue.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for your useful batches of cuttings.

F. RYAN.—Your letter shall appear next week. We are overcrowded in the present issue.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Thanks for the list. We note, as requested, that you have received three parcels of literature from anonymous donors for distribution at Birmingham.

W. H. DRAKIN (Calcutta).—We have received your donation of £1 towards the proposed Joseph Symes Fund, and are holding same till we hear from him. It will not be easy to send out a lecturer to take his place during his absence. With regard to your inquiry *re* W. W. Collins, we have to say that he is now representing Christchurch again in the New Zealand parliament.

SEVERAL correspondents write us respecting orders they have sent to Mr. Forder, which have not been executed, nor have their remittances been returned. We can only say that Mr. Forder has no sort of connection now with the Freethought Publishing Company, to which orders for literature should be sent direct, as is announced in this journal weekly.

TOM B.—We will try to act on your suggestion when we have leisure to do so. No doubt it would be very useful to Freethinkers to have profitable courses of reading pointed out to them. But many of the books would be expensive, and recourse would be necessary in most cases to Free Libraries, which are, unfortunately, not as well furnished as they should be with advanced literature.

JAMES READ.—Our articles on Grant Allen were not meant to be "unkind," but all criticism is apt to look like that to some readers. You appear to think that he was not "lawfully married." If that is your idea, you are mistaken. We believe in reform of the marriage laws as much as you do, but reform and abolition are two very different things. No doubt a large number of marriages are unhappy. People make mistakes in this direction, as they make mistakes in other directions. And many people are not good to live with, being callous, selfish, and exacting, and poor friends as they are poor husbands and wives. It is absurd to charge upon institutions the result of the common frailty of human nature. And every system has its disadvantages as well as its advantages. We can only judge by the balance in any case.

W. COX.—See paragraph.

OLD MEMBER.—Yes, it *is* very amusing. We don't think any Society ever had so much gratuitous advice as the N. S. S. People who don't belong to it, and some who are known to hate it, often show a wonderful interest in its welfare. It reminds us of what Colonel Ingersoll once said about the orthodox folk who used to tell him how much more effective he would be as a Freethought advocate if he took their advice. "Do you really want me to succeed?" he asked. "Suppose," he added, "the general on the other side in a battle sent in a messenger under the white flag, with an intimation that your men were all firing too low and hitting nobody, would you tell your men to shoot higher?"

T. FISHER.—We will deal with it next week.

J. RAWLINGS.—Glad to hear you are so pleased with *Bible Romances*.

H. L. ROJO.—Of course it is regrettable that a man like Max Adeler has found Jesus in the school of Sheldon and Co. But cases of degeneration will occur. Thanks for your letter and the cutting.

JOHN SUMNER.—Miss Vance has shown us your letter. Mr. Foote's two volumes of *Flowers of Freethought* contain selected articles of his from the *Freethinker*. Perhaps you wish to see a more recent selection, which you say would "form a volume of very much more than ordinary interest."

RECEIVED.—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—What is Right?—Freethought Magazine—Crescent—Umpire—"Religion and Reason," by "Truth-Seeker" (Watts & Co.)—Ethical World—Yarmouth Mercury—Sunday Reader—Public Opinion (New York)—Boston Investigator—Brann's Iconoclast—Two Worlds—New Century—Liberator—Truthseeker (New York)—Manchester Daily Dispatch.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

THE second Freethought Demonstration of this season took place on Sunday morning on Clerkenwell Green. There was a capital audience, which grew into a very fine one as the speaking proceeded. Mr. Thurlow acted as chairman, and addresses were delivered by Messrs. Watts, Cohen, and Foote, who were all cordially received and warmly applauded. Fortunately, the threatened disorder was not even attempted. A more orderly meeting could not have been desired. True, a Christian gathering was rather too close to the Freethought one, and did its best to cause confusion by means of a harmonium and plentiful hymn-singing. But the Freethought platform held practised speakers who were not easily disconcerted.

The third Demonstration took place in the evening in Regent's Park. Mr. Wilson's brake served as usual for a platform, and his handsome pair of prize horses were freely admired by the crowd. Mr. Thurlow again acted as chairman, and there were four speakers. First came Mr. Heaford, who was bright and energetic, and made an excellent impression. Then came Mr. Cohen, who was witty as well as philosophical. He was followed with close attention, and loudly cheered. Next came Mr. Watts, who explained the nature of Secular morality, and whose speech was highly appreciated. Last came Mr. Foote, who wound up the proceedings with a half-an-hour's address, which was profusely punctuated with laughter and applause. It should be mentioned that two American friends, Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, of Chicago, were accommodated with seats on the brake. Such meetings are (we believe) quite unknown in America, and the visitors found it a most enjoyable novelty.

The most noticeable feature of that Regent's Park Demonstration was its size. It was a large gathering when Mr. Heaford spoke, and it went on increasing and increasing until it was a vast assembly. It grew still further while Mr. Foote was speaking, and his voice, which is none of the weakest, had to be forced to its utmost power to reach the people on the edge of the crowd. And the meeting was orderly and sympathetic from beginning to end, with just two slight exceptions. One grey-bearded Christian, who was at least old enough to know better, insisted on asking for "explanations," until the park-keeper came up and explained to him that he had better get outside; and, as the park-keeper was a resolute-looking man, who wore the Victoria Cross upon his breast, his "explanation" was accepted with great alacrity. Another interrupter was allowed to remain. This was a dark-eyed, eager-looking little woman, who was very anxious about the souls of the speakers. About every ten minutes she uttered a pious ejaculation. Finally, she said that she "ought to have an hour or two on that brake." Whereupon the people around her were nearly convulsed with laughter. One or two hours! What a lot she must have had to say! And what she must have suffered with all that message from the Lord pent up within her!

Collections are not allowed in the Royal Parks, otherwise the ladies—Miss Vance and the rest—might have taken up a good collection on behalf of the N. S. S. For the tremendous

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crowd consisted for the most part of well-dressed people, and some of them could obviously have contributed more than coppers without missing what they gave. We mention this in order to show how necessary it is for Freethinkers to provide the sinews of war for such campaigning.

The fourth Demonstration will be held this evening (July 22) at 7 o'clock in Hyde Park, near the Marble Arch. Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, Moss, and other speakers, will address the meeting, which is sure to be a very large one. We know for a fact that Freethinkers bring friends to these Demonstrations whom they cannot persuade to enter a Freethought hall. Hence—as well as for other reasons—the wisdom of putting our best advocates on the Demonstration platforms.

Besides speaking at Clerkenwell Green on Sunday morning, and at Regent's Park in the evening, Mr. Cohen lectured at Finsbury Park in the afternoon. This is really too much in broiling weather. We strongly advise Mr. Cohen not to presume upon his youth. He may have to pay the penalty when he is older. And we have too few platform advocates to encourage any of them in deliberate (if slow) suicide. Besides, Mr. Cohen has for some time been a husband, and is now a father, and the future has a personal as well as a theoretical claim upon him.

Mr. A. B. Moss was also overdoing it last Sunday, lecturing in the morning at Station-road, Camberwell, and in the afternoon and evening at Brockwell Park, where he had fine meetings. We offer him, in all kindness, the same advice that we have given to Mr. Cohen. We don't want to see a line on Monday's newspaper bills, "Sunstroke to a Secular Lecturer."

Mr. R. P. Edwards had a large audience in Victoria Park on Sunday, and his lecture on "The Teachings of Jesus" was much appreciated. Opposition was offered in the shape of questions by the C. E. S. chairman, who steered clear, as the lecturer remarked, of every vital point.

"Pulpit and Pew" is a standing heading in the *Birmingham Weekly Mercury*, and number nineteen of the series, in the July 14 issue, was devoted to the open-air meetings in the Bull Ring. It was brightly and cleverly written by an evidently well-practised hand. The young man of earnest mien and respectable black coat, with the red tie, opening fire on the Thirty-nine Articles, was presumably Mr. H. Percy Ward. There was an opposition meeting of Christian Endeavorers, but the "congregation" only included a few small children, who only wanted to hear the singing, while "here was the Secularist with a fast-increasing audience." The reporter tells the gospel truth, and his attitude is strictly impartial. What he most admires is the English way in which the difference is confined to arguments. In Ireland there would (he says) be a bad shindy, in France the rival speakers would have soon quarrelled, and in Germany the police would have prevented the Secularist meeting altogether. We congratulate Mr. Ward on the good impression he made upon this reporter.

The *Church Gazette* replies to Mr. Watts's article on Christianity and Social Evils. We cannot say that our contemporary answers the vital arguments in that article, but we cheerfully acknowledge the courtesy of its tone and attitude.

Jerome K. Jerome speaks out pretty freely in the *Sun* on the taking of "Our Religion" to China. He refers to the inhumanity of tug captains recently near New York, of lynchings in the Southern States, and of the Grimsby man who poured a can of paraffin over a negro cook and then set light to him. After these examples of Christianity, he says, one "grows a little tired sometimes of reading slosh about this same Christianity and civilisation. Eighteen to nineteen hundred years of it. Result—see daily paper. Were the old civilisations so much worse?"

John Burroughs, the delightful American essayist, in his recent volume entitled *The Light of Day*, speaks out boldly and plainly on the subject of religion. "The old theology," he says, "has few, if any, fast colors, and it has become faded and worn under the fierce light of the intense activity of our day. Let it go; it is outgrown and outworn. What mankind will finally clothe themselves with to protect them from the chill of the great void, or whether they will not clothe themselves at all, but become toughened and indifferent, is more than I can pretend to say. For my own part, the longer I live the less I feel the need of any sort of theological belief, and the more I am content to let the unseen powers go their way with me and mine without question or distrust."

The majority of the virile minds have already deserted the old faith, Mr. Burroughs says, and he continues: "And like the other emigration, the men go first; the women and children stay behind. Woman, more tender and emotional, cannot give up the old faiths; she shrinks back from the new land; it seems cold and naked to her spirit; she cleaves unto the past, and to the shelter of the old traditions. Probably the bravest among us do not abandon them without a pang. The old church has a friendly and sheltering look, after all, and the white monuments in the rear of it, where our kindred sleep—how eloquent is the silent appeal which they make! But what can be done? Thou shalt leave this land, the land of thy fathers, is a fiat which has gone forth as from the eternal."

Liverpool friends are requested to note that the N. S. S. Branch excursion will leave the Alexandra Hall to-day (July 22) at 2 p.m. A prompt start will be made, and those who wish to join the party should, therefore, be in good time. It should also be noted that the Alexandra Hall is closed on Sundays during the summer. Open-air meetings are being held in another part of the city.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has sent a donation towards the Ingersoll Chair in the Liberal University, Silverton, Oregon, U.S.A.

Naturally the conductors of the University are delighted. But their organ, the *Torch of Reason*, might have been better inspired than to exclaim that the University cannot now help becoming "a great, grand, glorious go." Ingersoll was a master of beautiful English, and it is to be wished that those who employ his name could catch a little of his quality.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund will be the subject of a special article and appeal by Mr. Foote in our next issue. Friends who have replied to his preliminary circular will there see their communications acknowledged, and in some cases dealt with. Those who have received the circular, and mean to reply to it, but have not yet done so, are earnestly requested to write to Mr. Foote by next Tuesday morning (July 24).

Dishonest Critics.

[There have been many "Thanksgiving services" for our recent successes in the Transvaal War.]

WHY thank the Lord for bloody graves,
O Christians pharisaic?
Why praise Him, pious fools and knaves,
Professional and laic?

In praising God we criticise
As much as in arraigning;
And if, when thanking, we are wise,
We're ditto when complaining.

If God we praise for what is good,
With Reason for our master,
We ought, when in a thoughtful mood,
To blame Him for disaster.

If Reason argues from success
To God with commendation,
It also argues from distress
To God with condemnation.

To praise and blame as facts suggest
Is rightly using Reason;
Ignoring "worst" and praising "best"
Is fear and mental treason.

Our praise to God for sieges raised
Implies this fact egregious:
That God must surely be dispraised
For letting foes besiege us.

The pious person is an ass
Who praises God for glad things,
Unless he thinks it right to pass
His censure for the sad things.

These fruitless God-belauders fill
The thoughtful man with pity,
As though he saw them try to till
The kerb-stones of a city.

Bestow your praise and blame on men
Who profit by and need them,
And not on ghosts beyond your ken,
Who neither need nor heed them.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

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Arks.

THE child will show us the origin of sacred arks. He loves to gather up his toys, his stray treasures, marbles, buttons, beans, etc., into a box which he can carry about with him, or put under his pillow at night. These little trifles are cherished with a kind of religious enthusiasm. We have no right to smile at the child until we have ourselves ceased to reverence flags, maces, relics, Eucharistic bread and wine, and the rest of the miscellany of political and religious symbols.

The first arks ever used for a sacred purpose were perhaps those constructed by the ancient Babylonians. Where did the Babylonians come from originally? From the shores of the Persian gulf. They were a seafaring folk, and they carried men and treasures in ships. Naturally they carried their gods in ships also. The Babylonian priests made models of boats in which they placed the small gods who were supposed to bring luck and kindly arrange the universe so as to suit the needs of their worshippers. Old inscriptions in the arrowhead language tell us of the holy ships which were carried in the public processions. They were ornamented with brilliant stones; for gods, like men and women, have always had a taste for jewelry. In Egypt, likewise, the gods patronised the small ships, and the coffers which contained the images of deities were borne by the priests in boats. The early Hebrews, who dwelt between the Babylonians and the Egyptians, picked up this primitive custom, and believed that their ark afforded them special favor and protection. According to their national legend, the first objects to be deposited in the ark were the two tables of stones inscribed with the Ten Words or Commandments. It is not likely that a people with very little culture would conceive the idea of a precious stone manuscript. But we know that stones have been everywhere worshipped by the human race in its fetishistic stage. We can readily imagine that the forefathers of the Jews preserved one or two stones in their sacred ship or box as tokens of the divine presence. Meteorites fallen from the upper air would be regarded with profound respect, and embodiments of the gods themselves. People would be forbidden to look into the holy coffer, just as aristocratic persons withdraw themselves from the gaze of the populace; and the higher the rank of the dignitary, the larger is the park that surrounds the dwelling, and the more difficult are the approaches and ceremonies necessary for access. There is an Old Testament fable which relates how a great calamity fell upon the rude villagers of Beth-Shemesh who dared to lift the lid and look into the ark of God. The squire objects to the vulgar yokels peeping in at his dining-room windows; and the gods want their privacy respected.

No doubt, as time elapsed, the more intelligent people would begin to see the grossness of this conception of God enclosed in a box. Some such supporter of a higher religion wrote a verse into the book of Samuel (2 Sam. vi. 2) as follows: "David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, which is called by the Name, even the Name of the Lord of Hosts that sitteth upon the cherubim." This description of the ark would seem to be a gentle hint that the Lord possessed a larger personality than could be put into the ark, and that the box only had a value because it bore the Name of the Deity and was traditionally connected with his worship. But it is quite clear from the Bible that the mass of the Hebrew people could not, for a long time, get so far forward on the way to Rationalism. They were sure that God and the box went together. The legend of the Wilderness represents the priests lifting the ark at each fresh stage of the journey of the tribes, and Moses then cries: "Rise up, O Yahveh, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." And when the ark rested and the wanderers camped for the night, the Leader said: "Return, O Yahveh, unto the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel." Thus, to the imagination of the Hebrew tribesmen, the Lord was bodily contained in the ark like a passenger in a sedan-chair. From this confined chancellerie he directed the course of the planets and planned the rise and fall of empires, in the manner of the great Napoleon, who wrote despatches and transacted the affairs of government while travelling in his coach from one battle-field to another. Yet he did not always find it possible to evade capture. When the Israelites were grappling with the invasion of the Philistines from the sea-coast, they suffered a defeat. A council of war was held, and the resolution passed: "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of Yahveh out of Shiloh unto us, that it may come among us, and save us out of the hand of our enemies." The chest was borne into camp amid immense demonstrations of joy, and Israel went out to fight with a feeling of invincibility. Unfortunately, the ark, with its august Contents, fell into the hands of the enemy. It proved to them as bad a property as the Wooden Horse to the Trojans. Out of the Wooden Horse sprang the armed Greeks, and out of the ark issued a train of disasters to the Philistines. Their god Dagon collapsed into ridiculous fragments; uncountable swarms of mice furnished the ladies of Ashdod with a topic for lively conversation; and an outbreak of skin-disease exhausted the medical resources of the government. Yahveh and the ark were humbly restored to their native soil, and, for many years, the sacred coffer was preserved with peculiar honor. King David placed the ark in a tent on Mount Zion, and Solomon transferred it to the inner sanctuary of his Temple. That part of the Old Testament which critics call the Priestly Code (a document which can be traced through the first six books of the Bible, and which dates from the period of the Exile in Babylon) shows an attempt to raise the dignity of the ark. This priestly account describes the sacred chest as covered with gold, overshadowed by golden cherubim, and as concealed in a chamber which was entered only once a year by the High Priest.

Finally, the ark disappeared altogether. What became of it? Some say it was carried off by the Babylonian conquerors of Jerusalem in the year 586 B.C. Others say it was hidden at that time of trouble and ruin by the prophet Jeremiah, who buried the ark and the altar of incense in a cave; and there, according to the dream of pious seers, these holy objects would remain until the last days. The Apocalypse (Rev. xi. 19) says that when the seventh angel sounds his magical trumpet the heavens will open and men will see the temple of God, and in the temple that very ark which was lost to view for so many centuries.

But the obvious fact is that the religion of Israel had become more refined. The higher teaching of prophets like Isaiah and Micah had prevailed, and the Jews could no longer believe in a God who resided in a species of portmanteau. The old fetish was discredited. God always has to follow the track of the human mind. When the human mind rises and broadens, God also rises and broadens. The deity who once dwelt in a model boat expanded, like the genie in the legend of the Arabian Nights, until he covered the starry heavens and embraced all the complexities of time and history. This was a natural and healthy development of the religious intellect, and it is a development which is still to be completed. A remnant of the ancient fetishism lingers in the belief that the Primal Cause, or the Divine Essence of things, resides in a circumscribed heaven, or can be specially interviewed in shrines and churches. Reason will gradually force theology from these last refuges. For a long time to come the theistic idea will stay in the shape of pantheism—the doctrine which regards the whole cosmos itself as the habitation and substance of God. This creed—which I do not accept, but which is at least dignified and austere—will at last give way to positivism pure and simple.

F. J. GOULD.

Minorities.

All that is great and judicious is found in the minority. There have been ministers who have had the people and the king against them, and have carried out their great plans alone. It must never be supposed that reason can be popular. Passion and feeling may become popular; but reason will ever remain the possession of a few eminent individuals.—*Goethe.*

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Man and Evolution.

WITH the second of the series of lectures by the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, entitled "Evolution and Man," we find ourselves in agreement on many points; but from many of his conclusions we dissent most heartily, and they seem to us to utterly invalidate his chief arguments. It is, however, a source of satisfaction to us to find that Mr. Lidgett sweeps aside the ordinary orthodox notion of the teachings of Darwin as a "caricature"; and he proceeds to state the conclusions of Darwin with more scientific precision than we are in the habit of getting from less trained and more bigoted controversialists. He quotes the words of Professor Alfred Russel Wallace as follows:—

> "On the whole, then, we find no one of the great apes can be positively asserted to be the nearest to man in structure. Each of them approaches him in certain characteristics, while in others it is widely removed, giving the idea so consonant with the theory as developed by Darwin that all are derived from a common ancestor, from which the existing anthropoid (man-like) apes, as well as man, have diverged."

In support of this view we think that there is not only "abundant and well-nigh irresistible evidence," as Mr. Lidgett admits, but we claim that there is overwhelming proof. The late Professor Drummond in his *Ascent of Man*, Professor Haeckel in his *Pedigree of Man*, as well as Huxley and Darwin, have demonstrated this up to the hilt. Take first the embryological evidence. Haeckel says:—

> "The phylogenetic importance of ontogeny, the value of the study of the embryo as an evidence in regard to pedigree, is in the first place based upon the fact that every organism, in its development from the egg, runs through a series of forms, through which in like succession its ancestors have passed in the long course of earth's history. The history of the embryo, therefore, is a picture in little, an outline of that of the race." (*Pedigree of Man*, page 270.)

The Rev. Scott Lidgett, then, admits that, as far as man's physical structure is concerned, man has come up from some lower animal form, and that his nearest known progenitor was an anthropoid ape; but while he argues that evolution teaches that all phenomena—whether physical or mental (and mental, after all, are physical)—are "the result of a gradual, orderly, self-continuing evolution or development," he wants to make an exception to this rule (which admits of no exceptions), and to agree with Russel Wallace in his belief that the higher nature of man—the spiritual—has been superadded by a special divine act. But what evidence has Mr. Lidgett for this? He advances none. The fact that Mr. Russel Wallace is a "spiritist," and believes that man has a spirit in him that can exist apart from the body, is no evidence that this assumption is true. Besides, we may ask, at what stage in the evolution of the animal does the spirit come into him? And what is it doing before it comes in? Does it exist eternally, or does it begin to be? If it begins to be, there is a reasonable presumption that it will cease to be. And if it always was, in what sense can it be said to be superadded? We once remember asking Colonel Olcott, then president of the Theosophical Society, whether he believed that all men possess a spirit within them that would endure when the body was dust, and he answered "Certainly." When we further pressed him to say whether he believed that idiots possessed this spirit, he replied: "Yes; only in this case the spirit has had the misfortune to get into a rotten tenement." Now this we hold to be a perfectly logical answer, for the spirit or soul in this case has a separate existence, apart altogether from the body, and has not been the result of any evolution of the mental faculties, nor has it been superadded by any divine act, but is an eternal existence; was alive before the child was born, and will endure after the child has developed into manhood, and gradually passes into second childhood—"sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything," and finally dies and is buried. The Rev. Scott Lidgett says:—

> "Two things may be broadly affirmed. In the first place, there are marvellous approximations here and there between the higher animals and man. Man has much of the animal about him, and, on the other hand, many of the animals display striking foreshadowing of many of the intellectual, emotional, and moral characteristics of man."

With this affirmation we are in complete agreement, but the affirmation which follows is open to objection and worthy of critical examination:—

> "Secondly, it is equally true that an enormous interval—physical, mental, moral, and spiritual—lies between man and the higher animals. In his self-consciousness, in the grasp and range of his reason, in his spiritual and moral nature, in his pursuit of the ideal, in his mastery of the world by growing knowledge, and in the use of it as the instrument of the higher life, in his power of language, and, above all, in what we call progress, man belongs to a totally different realm to the whole animal world beside, even though the difference may be one of degree (and vast in this respect), and not of kind."

Now the essence of the above sentence is contained in the last few words. Wonderful as man's mental powers are, they differ from those of the higher animals only in degree, and not in kind. Animals think and remember, and carry on whole processes of reason. Moreover, all animals that can be taught to go through any kind of performance—such as horses in the circus, dogs, elephants, etc.—require the faculties of perception, attention, memory, and imitation well developed. Animals, it must be remembered too, have language, as Darwin has shown, and it is absurd to deride their powers of expressing their emotions because we do not understand them.

But what does Mr. Lidgett mean by spiritual as distinguished from moral nature? Does he mean the poetical and the æsthetical? And surely these faculties are naturally evolved, and if they are purely natural it is a little egotistical for man to put himself "into a totally different realm" when the difference is only one of degree, and not of kind.

There is a marvellous difference of degree between the intellect of a Hottentot and that of a Herbert Spencer, yet they are both men; and we have not yet heard of anybody classing Herbert Spencer as belonging to a "totally different realm" from his less favored and less developed brother, the Hottentot. And when Mr. Lidgett is speaking of the enormous degree of difference between the intellect of man and the lower animals, it is only fair that he should compare the intelligence of the highest among the lower animals with the lowest man; and he will then find that there is far more difference between the brain power and intelligence of the highest man and those of the lowest man than there is between the lowest man and the highest ape. Observe what Darwin has to say on this head:—

> "A difference of degree, however great, does not justify us in placing man in a different kingdom, as will be best illustrated by comparing the mental powers of two insects—namely, a coccus and an ant, which undoubtedly belong to the same class. The difference is here greater than, though of a somewhat different kind from, that between man and the highest mammal. The female coccus, whilst young, attaches itself by its proboscis to a plant, and sucks the sap, but never moves again; is fertilised and lays eggs; and this is its whole history. On the other hand, to describe the habits and mental powers of the worker ant would require a large volume. I may, however, specify a few points. Ants certainly communicate information to each other, and several unite for the same work or games of play. They recognise their fellow ants after months of absence, and feel sympathy for each other. They build great edifices, keep them clean, close the doors in the evening and post sentries. They make roads as well as tunnels under rivers and temporary bridges over them by clinging together. They collect food for the community, and when an object too large for entrance is brought to the nest they enlarge the door, and afterwards build it up again. They store up seeds, of which they prevent the germination, and which, if damp, are brought to the surface to dry. They keep aphides and other insects as milch cows." (*Descent of Man*, page 147.)

Thus we see that the vast difference of degree in intelligence, between these two insects, does not place one in a "different kingdom" from the other, according to Darwin; and neither can we allow a similar difference between man and the higher animals to be a sufficient reason for placing man in a "totally different realm." The question of the alleged intellectual, moral, and spiritual difference between man and the higher animals is a very large one; and we, therefore, propose to devote a special article to its consideration.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

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Correspondence.

THE FALL OF MAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your last issue you have a long article entitled "The Clergy and Debate," which implies clergy are afraid to discuss their beliefs. This description does not suit me; and, therefore, both as a clergyman and a subscriber, I ask permission to give you a Christian view of the Fall, which in this issue you ridicule under the heading of "That Pippin."

To spare your space I will condense my remarks, and will be most happy to reply to any objections. Orthodox Christians believe Adam and Eve lived in a state of childlike innocence, with no evil inclinations of either mind or body. If we take the Ten Commandments as illustrating moral law, it is hard to see where they could have gone wrong. They knew of no other God, or of making graven images, nor had they any reason to blaspheme or decline to rest on the seventh day. They had no parents, would be sorry either to kill the other, and could not commit adultery, or steal, or slander, or covet.

Still creature perfection requires us to realise and rejoice in a felt dependence on our Creator. To test Adam's subjection to this law, the tree of knowledge was placed in Eden, and a more excellent test under the circumstances cannot be imagined. Amid much mysterious, we hold there is a species of knowledge which the Creator can safely know, but which created beings cannot. This is the knowledge of evil. God loathes it; we cannot help loving it. Why this should be I cannot tell; I state the fact. When we recollect how short is our time in this world, and how small our knowledge of the boundless universe, we should not be surprised at the mysteries connected with Christianity; more especially when we are aware the mysteries and difficulties connected with Agnosticism are tenfold greater.

The sin of Adam and Eve was deliberate. Their object was to render themselves independent of God, by learning all that Deity knew. It would be as absurd to say that a man who committed murder by gunshot was hanged for pressing with one finger a bit of metal, as to say all trouble befell us by merely plucking an apple. It was an attempt to set God at defiance which produced this awful result.

Scripture states it was the craft of a serpent which led Eve into this guilt. It further discloses, subsequently, that the reptile was on this occasion the unconscious instrument of Satan. I will continue to believe this until I am shown the Devil could not have employed a snake for such a purpose.

Now, I ask, can you or any of your readers give a better explanation of the condition in which we find ourselves than that of Genesis, which comes down to us from the earliest historic ages? If so, let us have it. Remember we find ourselves with contradictory instincts. We have inclinations to sin, and a conscience which forbids us to indulge them. No such mixed mental and moral condition is found elsewhere, and it agrees wonderfully with the theory of our having been once perfect. If you give a better account than that of Scripture, you will make me an Agnostic. But assuredly no scoffing or jeering is a worthy method of dealing with the question.

HENRY J. ALCOCK, M.A.

195 Portsdown-road, W.; July 12, 1900.

OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Ball is continually hinting that I invented the term "Objectionable Religion." If he will kindly refer to the *Freethinker* of April 29, he will see that it originated with Mr. Gould himself, and I hold it only ordinary politeness to employ the labels which people apply to themselves. I do not know what this religion is, and its adherents seem unable to give any information about its doctrines and ritual. As to its meaning; well—

> Its meaning we'll quickly dispose of.
> *It has no mortal meaning* that anyone knows of.

As to the ordinary variety, that fellow "Chilperic" maintains that "religion" signifies "a system of faith and worship." But everybody is aware that "Faith" is a woman's name; while "worship" is a title applied to magistrates. When you address a magistrate, you say "Your worship," so that, according to "Chilperic's" definition, "religion" consists of a lady and a magistrate. This is a very convincing style of argument, and has quite a Christian Evidence ring about it.

Mr. Ball has written a number of entertaining and instructive letters, but I may be permitted to remark that they deal with a vast variety of subjects that have no bearing on the question of the meaning of the word "religion." There have been numberless religions in this world of ours, and the adherents of each have felt themselves privileged to quarrel with all the others. The followers of the religion of Mohammed felt constrained to carry war into the territories of nations that had never injured them. The European religions sent out crusades which gave rise to a great deal of misery. The Spaniards introduced a Holy Inquisition to torture and murder people in the cause of religion. The French massacred 40,000 persons in one night on account of their religion. The Germans had a war for thirty years on the question of religion. We have professors of religion among us to-day whose chief amusement is to tell falsehoods about those who differ from them. And we should be really obliged if Mr. Ball would explain what "religion" is, that it should give rise to all these wars, murders, and massacres; or why it should generate such a spirit of evil-speaking, lying, and slandering among its adherents.

Then we have to pay 12½d. in the £ for School Board Rate; and hear a great deal about the necessity for "religion" in the Board schools. Perhaps Mr. Ball will explain what this "religion" is, and how much it will add to the rates when we get it in the Board schools.

Lastly, we have a number of people (doubtless misguided beings) calling themselves Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, and Freethinkers, who are all agreed in opposing "religion." We should be gratified to learn what "religion" is, that these individuals should take such pains to oppose it.

CHILPERIC.

WOMEN AND FREETHOUGHT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reading your valuable paper I am often struck with the optimistic view taken by certain of your writers as to the future of Freethought. So long as the greater part of mankind, and that part those who have the training of the young at the most impressionable period of their lives, have their imaginations fed on Sundays at the expense of their reason, I cannot see much prospect of a change for the better in the condition of things. What a decoction of improbabilities is served up in all churches for our delectation!—tales so wild and impossible that the stories of our childhood, *Little Red Riding-Hood*, *Beauty and the Beast*, etc., are reasonable in comparison.

It is surprising that "the sex" which, as a rule, is smart at a bargain and quick to seize an advantage in shopping expeditions, cannot put two and two together in church, nor reason their way out of the maze of words which hypnotises them. Is it the mechanical standing up and sitting down, or the monotonous voice of the minister descanting on the same old themes, or is their sole attention given to the finery of their neighbors, and thus their higher faculties become somnolent? The mischief begun on Sunday is continued during the week. Only works of imagination are read by women and girls as a rule; even newspapers, except the silly ladies' papers, are passed by, while they pore by the hour over works of imagination by authors of the type of Marie Corelli, Mrs. Henry Wood, etc. Can we wonder that so few women find time to think their way out of the bondage of superstition into the ways of "sweet reasonableness"? It is "an ill bird that fouls its own nest," but I must say we are not fit for the franchise nor to have equal rights with man. All the power given into our hands would be incontinently given over to the ministers of religion. It would mean a setting back of the clock to the time of the Middle Ages. I used to think equality for women meant more merciful treatment for the downcast and the unfortunate, but one cannot forget that women took part in the *Auto da Fés* and burning of heretics of old; and in these times, in America, where an advanced civilisation is supposed to obtain, women look calmly on while an untried negro is lynched and tortured. Not one has been known to protest, and put herself between the baited wretch and his tormentors. The raising of women must come from the outside. First of all, counter attractions are wanted to the church on Sundays. We must snatch back that seventh part of the week which, somehow or other, the clergy have taken for ages past as their own. Then, most of all, will come relief to children from the intolerable dreariness of the seventh day. May you prosper in your crusade against this and all other oppressions.

ELIZABETH.

The Editor Rebels.

When a man is busy, and trying to make a modest living, nothing irritates him more than to have a bearded woman rush in and take up his time in trying to get a subscription for the establishment of missions that are not needed. Men dislike this sort of women very much; a sight of one of them makes a man cross for half a day. Women of this character may think that they are doing good work, and that men have great respect for them; but they are mistaken.—*Atchison Globe*.

"What did the minister do when you inadvertently dropped the buckshot into the plate?" asked one Kentuckian. "He was very much annoyed," said the other; "he looked at me severely, and said that this was a church collection, not a campaign contribution."

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 7, Freethought Demonstration.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, W. Heaford; 6.30, R. P. Edwards.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, R. P. Edwards.

FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, W. Heaford.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, F. A. Davies; 7.15, A lecture. July 25, at 8.15, R. P. Edwards.

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, C. Mowbray.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (in the Bull Ring): 11, H. Percy Ward; 7 (Prince of Wales' Assembly Rooms), H. Percy Ward, "The Dishonorable Policy of the Liberal Education Eight." Mr. Ward will also lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8—weather permitting.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): Closed during the months of July and August.

LIVERPOOL: Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, closed until September 2. Outdoor lectures at the Monument, bottom of London-road, on August 12, 19, and 26, at 7 p.m.; and on September 2, at 3 p.m.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, A Friendly Gentleman Visitor, Lecture or Reading.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Final arrangements for Picnic.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—July 22, a., Victoria Park; e., Hyde Park Demonstration. 29, m., Station-road, Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye; e., West Ham Demonstration.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—July 22, Northampton. 29, m., Mile End; e., Stratford. August 26, m., Mile End.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—July 22, Birmingham. 29, Manchester. August 5, Birmingham; 12, Failsworth; 19, Northampton; 26, Birmingham.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—July 29, m., Station-road; a., Peckham Rye.

Ingersoll's Last Lecture.

"WHAT IS RELIGION?"

An Address delivered before the American Free Religious Association, at Boston, June 2, 1899.

Freethinkers should keep a copy of this Lecture always by them. It was Ingersoll's last utterance on the subject of religion. It shows him to have been a "rank Atheist" to the very end. Moreover, it is a summary of his life's teaching, and embalms his ripest thought.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Chinese Horrors.

A GOOD many of the clergy have used the "Peking Massacre" as a theme for their more or less facile pulpit eloquence. It is so easy (and safe) to be indignant with the Heathen Chinee, for he is a long way off and cannot retaliate, and all the "Powers" in the world are down upon him. Besides, those wretched Celestials are so irritating. They have a civilisation far older than our own; and although it is inferior in some respects, in others it is superior. Then again, they find their own religion good enough, and even better than ours. Sometimes they say that theirs is a religion for honest men, while ours is a religion for thieves and scoundrels, seeing that it promises heaven to the worst of men provided they "lay hold" on Christ at the last moment of their evil lives, and avail themselves of the virtue of his atoning blood. Now this is calculated to fill the average Christian, and especially the professional Christian, with boiling anger. Hence the present universal shout of execration. There are pro-Boers, because the Boers are Christians; but there are no pro-Boxers, because the Boxers are anti-Christians.

Canon Page Roberts, of St. Peter's, Vere-street, preached there on Sunday for the last time, before taking his holiday, and going into residence at Canterbury. Towards the end of his sermon he referred to the "great anxiety now felt as to the possibility or ghastly certainty of an awful crime having been perpetrated at Peking." Before such a crime, he said, we stood speechless—although he was talking about it. Such a crime, he continued, had few parallels in history. But is this true? Or is it one of those cheap falsehoods which modern Christian preachers are in the habit of palming off on ignorant congregations, who know next to nothing of history except what they have casually picked up in their random reading of magazines and newspapers?

If the European Legations have been murdered, it is an act of shocking savagery, a brutal violation of the immemorial law of nations. The worst barbarians are accustomed to respecting the person of an ambassador. He is a guest, and is therefore sacred. But the Legation buildings at Pekin had been for some time heavily armed, and, being defended by European soldiers and sailors, they doubtless appeared to the fanatical Chinese as foreign occupations rather than embassies. Still, the crime (if really perpetrated) is a dreadful one. We do not seek to palliate it. And if all Europeans—women and children, as well as men—have suffered the same fate, perhaps after the most sinister torture, in which the Chinese are said to be adepts; why, in that case, it is easy to understand, and hard to deprecate, the cry which is being raised for vengeance. It is at any rate necessary, at this time of day, that a nation like China should be taught that it cannot be allowed with impunity to murder wholesale and with deliberation the citizens of other countries who have a legal and recognised status within her borders; in other words, that a minimum of decency must be enforced upon all States in their international relations. That is right enough. But when a parson talks about this Peking massacre as having but few parallels in history, one is prompted to hold up one's hands in amazement at the ignorance or audacity of the speaker. Why, there have been many far worse massacres in the history of Christianity itself. The Saint Bartholomew Massacre was infinitely worse. It involved the murder of more than forty thousand persons, it was planned and carried out by priests and statesmen, it was acclaimed and blessed by the Pope. A hundred other instances of Christian cruelty and bloodshed might be cited. Take the case of the Jews. Up to recent times they have frequently been massacred by the Christians in various parts of Europe. Prior to the reign of Edward I., when they were practically banished from England, not to return until the protectorate of Cromwell, they were often massacred in hundreds; and, on more than one occasion, they slew their wives and children to prevent them from falling into the hands of the cruel and lascivious Nazarenes; just as most of us hope that if the Chinese mob did overpower the Legations, the Europeans had time to slay their women and children with their own hands. When one reads of the sufferings of the Jews in Christian Spain one is filled with an agony of loathing. The vilest smiling butcherers in China could not possibly beat the cruelty of the Spaniard. Even in Protestant Germany the robbery, oppression, and murder of the Jews was simply diabolical. Their tormentors had nothing to learn of the Chinese in the arts of devilry.

Let us go back along the stream of time. Let us take the period of the later Saxon kings, the Normans, and the early Plantagenets. Cutting off the feet and hands of prisoners, amputating their noses, putting out their eyes, and even castrating them, were common occurrences. Yet England was then devoutly Christian. What she wanted was science and humanity.

Let us go back still farther. King Edwy, who ascended the throne of the Heptarchy in 955, fell in love with a beautiful princess called Elgiva. Had he made her his mistress, the clergy would have raised no objection. But he married her, and she was within the degrees of affinity prohibited by the canon law. Even that offence might have been overlooked if Edwy had been more humble and docile in the hands of the ecclesiastics, who were incensed at his independence. Odo, Archbishop of Canterbury, sent into the palace a party of soldiers, who seized the queen, and burnt off the beauty of her face with hot irons. Then they carried her by force to Ireland, to remain there in perpetual exile. Being cured of her wounds, she tried to return to the embraces of her husband. But the Archbishop sent a party to intercept her. She was hamstringed, and she expired after three days of frightful torture.

Branding a beautiful woman's face, only because her husband loved her! Holding the hot irons against her seething flesh! Grim hate watching with zest the defacement of the loveliest of nature's productions! And then hamstringing this unfortunate woman—cutting the sinews of her thighs, and killing her by inches! Damn these Christian monks, and these priests of Christ. Yes, damn them. What milder language can a man use? Not a monk or a priest, but a *man;* one who reverences the living temple of maternity.

The fact is that the Christians, as Christians, have no right to be indignant at Chinese or any other horrors. The history of their own religion is too black with crime and red with blood. Even if the Chinese should hold white hostages, and carry out a threat to boil some of them in oil on the approach of the European army to Peking, they would only be tearing a leaf out of the torture-book of the Inquisition.

G. W. FOOTE.

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Christian Miracles a Delusion.

A CORRESPONDENT, who signs himself "A Christian Reader of the *Freethinker*," writes asking me to answer the following question: "Do not the miracles of the Bible, particularly the Creation, the Resurrection, the Incarnation, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead, prove the truth of Christianity?" My reply to the interrogation is most decidedly in the negative; and to believe that they do appears to me to be one of the many theological delusions which are still to be found existing in the minds of orthodox adherents. It would have been much easier for me to have answered my correspondent's question if he had stated what he meant by the phrase, "the truth of Christianity." In what sense does he mean is it true? As a "divine system," or as a record of actual facts? True in its entirety, or only in part? In my opinion, Christianity, like all religions, is the outcome of the human mind, and a combination of truth and error; and our duty is to accept the former and reject the latter. Broadly speaking, I allege that, even if the supposed testimony in favor of miracles were proved valid, it would be no evidence that *all* the teachings of Christianity are true. For instance, it would not establish as a fact what is called original sin, the fall of man, and his redemption through the death of Christ. Neither would it prove that the teachings of Jesus as to prayer, poverty, non-resistance to evil, the neglect of mundane affairs, the virtue of belief, and the possession of devils, were verities. Besides, the truth of Christianity is generally supposed to rest upon the supposition of its "divine" nature. But no number of miracles could possibly establish the claim of "divinity," for the reason that the Bible itself teaches that many of the miracles were performed through Satanic agencies. (See Deut. xiii. 1-3; Matt. xxiv. 24; Acts viii. 9, 10.) Was not Archbishop Trench right in saying that "a miracle does not prove the truth of a doctrine, or the divine mission of him that brings it to pass"?

My correspondent refers me to Dean Farrar, who writes* :—

> "The miracle of Creation—the miracle which first called light out of darkness and order out of chaos—the miracle which first thrilled the spark of life into inanimate matter, and evolved from its dust the rich diversities of sentient existence—the miracle of the human nature of the Son of God—those two miracles of the Creation and the Incarnation involve and include, to my mind, the credibility of *all* other miracles. I withhold my credence from no occurrence—however much it may be called 'miraculous'—*which is adequately attested, which was wrought for adequate ends, and which is in accordance with the revealed laws of God's immediate dealings with man.*" (The italics are the Dean's.)

Now it is difficult to see how the alleged events referred to by the Dean can furnish any proof of the reality of miracles, or of "the truth of Christianity." The Dean gives no reason in support of the theory that the alleged Creation ever took place. But, granting that it did, why is it termed a "miracle"? The statement that "sentient existence" was "evolved from dust" is thoroughly opposed to scientific fact. If it be true that "the credibility of *all* other miracles" is involved in the Creation and in the Incarnation, then the evidence for their truth is, to say the least, exceedingly slender. Of the supposed Creation nothing is *known*; the belief in it is based entirely upon conjecture. As to the Incarnation, who can understand it? The Rev. George S. Barrett, D.D., in his recently-published work, *The Bible and its Inspiration*, frankly admits that he cannot reconcile Christ's "human limitation of knowledge with the fulness of the Divine omniscience our Lord possessed as Son of God." The rev. gentleman adds: "I cannot understand how it was possible for one and the same Divine Person at the same time to be limited and unlimited in knowledge, and I confess all the attempts which have been made to combine the two appear to me to be failures" (p. 143).

If the credibility of the New Testament miracles depends upon the test supplied by Dean Farrar—namely, that they are "adequately attested," and were "wrought for adequate ends," then their truth cannot be demonstrated. What were the "adequate ends" of Jesus cursing the fig-tree; of his turning water into wine for people who had already "well drunk"; and of his extracting a legion of devils from a poor lunatic, and sending them into two thousand swine, causing them to be choked in the sea, and the owner of the swine to lose his property (see Mark v. 13; Luke viii. 33)? As to the miracles being "adequately attested," let us take two of those mentioned by my correspondent—namely, the Resurrection and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The "testimony" in reference to both is far from being adequate. What amount of unimpeachable evidence is existing to prove that Christ rose from the dead? We have simply the New Testament accounts, but how far do they agree as to when, where, by whom, and how frequently, Jesus was seen after his death? All accounts agree, it is true, that the women, on their visit to the sepulchre, found that the body had gone, and that someone in white spoke to them; but here agreement ends. How many women went to the sepulchre? John says one; Matthew says two; Mark says three; Luke says several. How many persons in white raiment appeared to the women? Mark speaks of one young man; Matthew speaks of one angel; Luke of two men; John of two angels, who made their appearance *after* Peter and John had been there. What said these apparitions? Matthew and Mark say that they proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus, and his departure into Galilee; and that they sent a message to his disciples in order that they might follow him. But Luke says they simply stated that he was risen, and referred to a supposed prediction. According to John, they only asked Mary: "Woman, why weepest thou?" If we are to believe Matthew, Luke, and John, the women carried the information as to what had occurred at once to the disciples. According to Mark, "they said nothing to any man." To whom did Jesus, after his death, appear? Matthew says it was first to two women and then to his disciples. John says it was first to one woman, then twice to the assembled Apostles. According to Luke, it was to no *woman*, but to Cleopas and his companion, then to the eleven disciples. But perhaps Mark was nearer the truth in recording, "neither said they anything to any man." Where did Jesus appear after his resurrection? Was it in Jerusalem and *then in Galilee* with his disciples, as Matthew informs us; or was it in Jerusalem, and *there alone*, where his disciples were commanded to remain, as Luke says. Besides, an important question arises: Who declared "I saw him"? "He was seen" is only second-hand evidence, which is not sufficient "testimony" to prove the reality of the much-talked-of "Christian miracles." The discrepancies just cited render the accounts quite inadequate to prove that Christ, after being dead and buried for "three days," "rose from the dead," and conversed, face to face, with many of his disciples and friends. How comes it to pass, too, that scarcely any of his friends, to whom he is said to have appeared after his resurrection, knew him? When he appeared to the eleven in Galilee, by his appointment, as we are told, some of them "doubted" as to whether it was Jesus—a very suspicious statement of Matthew. Luke assures us that the two disciples, with whom Jesus conversed many hours, did not recognise him—a circumstance that would require a large amount of Christian faith to believe true. Even Mary Magdalene, after looking at, and speaking to, Jesus, did not know him, but thought he was a gardener! Where is the man at the present day who would rather believe the dead came to life again than doubt the "testimony" of Christ's resurrection, as furnished in the Four Gospels?

The same lack of trustworthy testimony obtains in reference to Lazarus, who, it is said, was raised from the dead after he had been in the grave four days. To say nothing of the number of hours these "four days" may have consisted of, the mode by which Lazarus was resuscitated was very peculiar. Jesus called him with a *loud voice*. Had Lazarus been simply asleep, the "loud voice" would be understood; but supposing him to have been dead, it is not at all clear why he should have been called with a *loud* voice. If Christ really had the power of raising the dead to life, would it not have been more to his glory, and have prevented many doubts, if he had made choice of some persons

* *The Bible: its Meaning and Supremacy*, p. 224.

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who were well known to have been unquestionably dead—known to have lain so long in their graves that their putrified state might have been visible to all around? Why were not the magistrates and principal rulers invited to bear witness? Why were they not solicited to examine the body, in order to prevent the possibility of fraud? Had this been done, and Christ's power made manifest, his fate probably would have been very different to what it was.

If there had been an indisputable miracle wrought in the resurrection of Lazarus, why should the Chief Priests and Pharisees have been so incensed as to take counsel from that day forth to put both Jesus and Lazarus to death for it? Where was the provocation? If the Jews had been ever so cankered with malice and hatred to Jesus before, yet such a stupendous miracle should have been enough to stop their mouths and turn their hearts. Or, if their prejudices against Jesus were insuperable, and they hated him the more for the number and greatness of his miracles, why was inoffensive Lazarus, upon whom this good and great work was wrought, an object of their hatred too? To say that it was downright inhumanity, barbarity, and brutality in the Jews to hate Lazarus as well as Jesus, will not do. Though this may, with many Christians, suffice, yet it cannot satisfy reasonable and unprejudiced men, who must have other conceptions of human nature, in all ages and nations, than to think it possible that a man, in the case of Lazarus, could be hated and persecuted for having had such a good and wonderful work performed upon him.

CHARLES WATTS.

Uselessness of Prayer.

"The religious man prays—that is to say, he begs; he sings hymns—that is to say, he flatters; he sacrifices—that is to say, he pays tribute; chiefly out of fear, but partly in the hope of getting something in return."—WINWOOD READE *(Martyrdom of Man)*.

BURIED in a mass of uninteresting Old Testament history, and often overlooked by the Biblical student, is a chapter containing the following curious little passage: "And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet until his disease was exceeding great, *yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians*" (2 Chron. xvi. 12). In the Revised Version there is the alternative suggestion of "magicians," but practically it is the same thing, for the magicians were the only physicians of the time, and their nostrums partook of useful herbal treatment as well as the employment of so-called "charms." Evidently Asa was a man of common sense, and considerably in advance of his age. Like Secularists of to-day, he seems to have believed that science is the Providence of life, and that spiritual dependency might involve material destruction. His judicious preference of physic to prayer in times of almost universal ignorance and superstition does him infinite credit, and entitles his biography to a much more careful study than it seems to have hitherto received.

Pages have been written of extravagant panegyric on Biblical personages much less deserving of praise than this neglected and but-little-heard-of king, whose life, as briefly recorded in the Chronicles, is at least free from disgusting incidents of murder, rapine, and pious perfidy. The record is, therefore, not unsuitable for family reading. To the scientist it is not without valuable instruction and suggestiveness. Nor is it altogether devoid of entertaining features. Mark, for instance, the charming amazement of the chronicler as he records the unexpected and courageous choice made by the king: "Yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." How the simple-minded old scribe must have raised his eyes and hands in pious horror! And then the priesthood! What scowling and growling there must have been in the Temple, and what cries raised of "the Church in danger!"

This, however, was not the first occasion on which the gouty monarch had ignored the Lord, even the Lord God of Israel. It appears that, in carrying on one of his campaigns, King Asa relied on the assistance of an earthly ally rather than on the help of Jehovah; and, curiously enough, the alliance proved perfectly successful. Funnier still, Asa purchased the assistance with silver and gold which he took out of the treasures of the House of the Lord. From this it appears that Asa was a practical man, and knew how to manage things better than his pious predecessors. It must be confessed that it was rather cruel to rob the Lord in order to hire a rival. To seek the aid of someone else would have been galling enough in all truth to the jealous God of Israel; but to pay for the assistance with the treasures belonging to the Lord was certainly the unkindest cut of all.

Immediately after the great Jehovah had thus been slighted, a seer—possibly zealous for the safety of vested interests—waited on his majesty to warn him. Said the seer to Asa: "Because thou hast relied on the King of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the King of Syria escaped out of thine hand." This, of course, must have been a prophecy, because, so far as the "sacred" narrative goes, nothing of the kind had then happened. Naturally enough, Asa was "wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison-house, for he was in a rage with him because of this thing."

Thus we perceive that, like many other men of strong mind and passions, Asa was subject to an infirmity of temper. Indeed, it is not at all unlikely that, when the provoking seer entered the palace and commenced his croaking, the king kicked him out of doors, even with his royal toe—supposing, of course, that his majesty's infirmity permitted of such an exertion.

The Chronicler adds, with ill-disguised animus: "And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time."

In his earlier years Asa appears to have been somewhat piously disposed. He very successfully attacked idolatry, and in its place established the worship of the Lord. But, as he matured in knowledge and judgment, the fear of the Lord gradually forsook him, and at last we find him ignoring God and consulting the physicians. The Scriptures say that "the prayer of a righteous man availeth much," but Asa wasted not his breath in vain supplication to Deity. Disease is not to be averted or removed by prayer. Henry Ward Beecher once said: "There are many ills which the Bible and Prayer Book cannot cure, but which can be cured by a good perspiration and a breath of fresh air."

Eventually Asa went the way of all flesh: "And Asa slept with his fathers and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign." His life was not a long one, yet it was not uneventful. The pious Chronicler—with better taste and more honesty than his modern fellow scribes—invents no horrible death-bed for the "infidel" Asa. The king's last moments are not traduced. He seems to have died decently as an honest man should die. We are told that they "buried him in his own sepulchre, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and they laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art; and they made a great burning for him."

And really there seems to be something not a little poetic about this description of the death and burial of Asa. "And they laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art." What a contrast to the death of David, "the man after God's own heart," who closed his career of infamy by imploring his son to bring down the hoary head of an adversary to the grave with blood, and who seems to have died not inappropriately with the word "blood" on his lips. To many minds it must appear that the heretic Asa, brief as his life was, is a far more estimable personage than the pious psalm-singing, throat-cutting David.

As we have said, there is a great deal of the noble and the beautiful about the termination of Asa's career. The poetry of that expressive phrase, "And he slept with his fathers," is heightened by the picturesque description of the sweet and wholesome burial, while the introduction of "the apothecaries' art" forms an appropriate feature in the last offices performed for a monarch who seems to have had so strong a predilection for medical science.

Why—why will not Christians learn a lesson from Asa, and, instead of pretending to trust in a God who only helps those who help themselves, or, in other words, never helps anybody, turn their attention entirely to those material means which alone are efficacious?

FRANCIS NEALE.

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Wanted, Parsons.

WE have all been laboring under a delusion. We have imagined, in our stupidity, that home affairs, such as land, housing, agricultural and municipal questions, and foreign affairs such as the wars in Africa, Ashanti, China, and the threatened trouble in India and the Soudan, constitute the principal matters that threaten our national security and promise of individual development. But from another source—from the high puissant convocation of the see of Canterbury—we now learn that we are faced with a still graver danger, one that it seems almost impossible to arrest. Their Reverences in the Lower House and their Lordships in the Upper House have solemnly awakened to the fact that the quantity of parsons available does not keep pace with the growth of the population, and the quality of such as are to hand leaves much to be desired. Verily, our troubles never come singly, and in the day of our greatest trial we are threatened with the decline of a body of men whose contributions to the welfare of the nation are beyond calculation.

The public at large seems oblivious to the danger. There appears to exist no burning desire on the part of the laity that the number of the clergy should be increased, although there does exist a pretty general feeling that the quality of the existing article might be improved. The necessity for increasing the number of parsons is one that is apparent to the clergy alone. And in this respect the profession of a clergyman differs from all other businesses with which I am acquainted. With an ordinary trade, the fewer there are the better pleased are its members, for the obvious reason that business is kept to a few. The clergy seem to delight in multiplying themselves, and the reason is equally obvious on a little consideration. A tradesman does, to a considerable extent, depend upon his wares, appealing to the natural needs of people for their custom. The parson, on the contrary, realises that the principal security for building up a good profitable business is the exclusion of everything in the shape of competition. The more numerous, the more powerful his order is, the more chance there is of excluding everything of an opposite character. Consequently, the less demand there is, on the part of the people, for clergymen, the more urgent seems the necessity for creating them. It is the law of supply and demand—with a difference.

Plainly, and in other words, the clerical profession is not produced and sustained as other professions are, by the normal and natural requirements of life, but is an artificial product, and requires a set of artificial conditions for its existence. The priesthood is only a normal institution so long as it is fulfilling its essential function of acting as a mediator between man and the supernatural forces by which he believes himself to be surrounded. So long as these forces are believed in, the institution of the priesthood is a natural and a normal one. But with the decline of the belief in the supernatural, the natural demand for the priest dies away, with the result that artificial conditions are created for the purpose of perpetuation, a function properly belonging to the uncivilised ages of the world's history. As the religious feelings threaten to die away unless artificially stimulated, a special body of men are trained for that purpose. The clergy labor, first of all, to create or strengthen a special set of feelings that demand *their* existence, and then appeal triumphantly to these feelings as the warranty for the existence of a priesthood. This, and nothing but this, is the secret of the frantic desire of the clergy to secure the controlling voice in matters of education. Knowing as they do that, were the acceptance of Christianity left until the individual mind was properly matured, ninety-nine per cent. would reject it, and even the remaining one would be looked upon as a reversion of type—knowing this, there comes the determination to secure the child before it is old enough to intelligently criticise all that is placed before it, and, by instilling certain beliefs while it is young, secure its support in maturity. The desire of the clergy to increase their number is, therefore, quite comprehensible. It is the expression of the desire to force certain beliefs on the nation, not because national welfare demands them, but because the existence of the clergy is dependent upon their acceptance.

To return to Convocation. According to the Ordination service, the candidate for holy orders is "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost." According to the bishops of Winchester, Gloucester, and Rochester, the real difficulty in the way of securing more parsons is that the salaries are not large enough. The Church service declares the Holy Ghost selects the candidates with an eye to their spiritual qualifications. That is for the public ear. The bishops, assembled in a business conclave, declare that parents and guardians select the profession with an eye to its financial advantages, and, when these are not promising enough, put their sons to something else. I think the bishops have the right sow by the ear for once.

The best of humor is unconscious, and there is something supremely funny in a gathering of bishops receiving from £3,000 to £10,000 per year—to say nothing of an archbishop with £15,000—prating about poor pay keeping people from entering the clergy. About a year ago a writer in one of the dailies calculated that the salaries paid to Church of England clergymen averaged about £400 per head. There is evidently enough money in the profession, although it may be unequally divided. But the bishops do not suggest anything in the nature of a more equal distribution of Church funds. Oh dear no. It is the public who are asked to find more money, so that clerical incomes may be raised to such a point that the Church may be able to buy the support it cannot otherwise command.

And what humbug this cry about the poverty of the clergy is! A small number of the clergy receive less than £100 per year, cries out the religious press. Yes, but the majority of these small salaried situations are in villages where, if a man is not "passing rich on forty pounds a year," yet, as a writer in last week's *Church Times* points out, the sum is enough to supply all needful comforts and leave a small margin—particularly as the official sum does not represent *all* the parson's pickings. Besides, how much would these people earn if they were out of the pulpit? Possibly eighteen shillings a week; possibly not even that. As a sober matter of fact, and taking into consideration the average ability of the clergy, there is no profession in Great Britain that is more remunerative. Another writer in the paper I have mentioned cites the case of a clergyman who had two clever, brilliant sons in one of the Universities, and who ingenuously remarked: "I don't know yet what professions they will enter, but they will not be clergymen." Exactly; but, if they had been neither clever nor brilliant, the probability is that the clergy list would have been increased, if not enriched, by at least two names.

The bishops were not quite agreed, however, that it was wholly a question of finance. The Bishop of London had discovered "a touching desire" among elderly men of business who "felt themselves called to the work of the Church." It would be interesting to know the state of their business affairs when they received the "call." The Bishop of Bath and Wells had been told of a number of young men who had gone to the war, and who had promised to take Orders if they returned. That may only have been their method of bribing the Lord to look after them, like the sailor who promised his saint a valuable gift if he brought him safely out of storm, and who, when reminded by a shipmate that he hadn't money enough to purchase it, replied: "Shut up, you dolt; I'm only fooling him." Finally, both the Bishop of London and the Archbishop of Canterbury found the cause of the decrease of the clergy in modern conditions. "They saw a dislike of dulness everywhere," said the latter with unconscious satire; and the former, after pointing out that there had been "some intellectual falling off in the standard of the candidates," attributed this and the decline in numbers to the general development of secular life. And with this, too, I am inclined to agree. As I pointed out a week or two ago, the Church could only secure men of real ability and honesty while science and social life were undeveloped. Given a development of both, and the Church becomes in an increasing measure a field for ability allied to intellectual crookedness on the one side, and honesty allied to stupidity on the other.

On the whole, one is inclined to do anything but weep on hearing that there is some trouble in enlisting recruits for the Black Army. Already, lumping all

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together, it is about 50,000 strong, and no serious and impartial thinker can contend that this huge body of men give anything like an adequate return to the community for the money spent in their support. One here and there may take an interest in social reforms, or lend a hand to some useful movement; but this they might well be doing in their ordinary capacity as citizens. As a body, it is notorious that progressive ideas flourish least amongst the clergy. They by instinct, by training, by interest, by profession, are tied to the past, and their concern in the present and future is to keep on cherishing the beliefs that have been, and, if people will move, to keep them walking in the same circle for ever and ever. Not in Great Britain only, but in all parts of the world, it is the same. In Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Spain, the bulk of the clergy are on the side of the few and against the interests of the many. Here and there a man may rise superior to his order, and his conduct falsify its traditions. But all that this shows is that the better aspect of human nature will assert itself under the most unfavorable conditions, and that a good man is not always crushed by his training or general environment. But in the main the Black Army remains a deadly enemy to all enlightenment, considering only how it may best rivet the follies of the past upon the mind of the future, and perpetuate an order that has immortalised itself chiefly by its assaults upon the champions of human freedom.

C. Cohen.

Satan in the Ironworks.

"We drove him out beautifully," said the Ritter von Schwarz, who told the story, "and cheaply too. It was about 1884, and the works were in Bengal, near the Ganges. The Brahmins didn't like the works, and when cholera broke out, and twenty-five workmen died in one day, it was clear enough, they said, that the gods had sent Shaïtan, the Devil, to destroy the people who had been so impious as to work for the British Government on the borders of the Holy Ganges. I knew that the men had caught cholera from the stagnant water which they drank—water that collected in the pits whence the iron ore had been removed—but I couldn't get the beggars to believe it.

"When the men dropped dead all over the place, right under my eyes, things became serious. I had scarcely any European workmen, and on the night of the big mortality sixty natives ran away. They burnt their dowrahs and took their families away, but they left their wages behind, which shows how they had lost their heads. The Brahmins were winning all along the line. But they had reckoned without my factotum, Jamadar.

"'Jamadar,' said I, 'is it true that Shaïtan is in the works?'

"'Certainly, sahib,' said he.

"'Then,' I said, 'we must get rid of him. In my country the Devil sometimes visits the stables overnight and turns the milk red. Then we call the priest, and he drives him out, and we are grateful and make a present to the Church. Cannot they drive devils out in Bengal?'

"'The sahib might try,' said Jamadar.

"'Yes,' I said, 'but I don't know if your Shaïtan is the same that we have to drive out in my country. But you, Jamadar, are a Brahmin yourself, a man of piety; surely you can tackle Shaïtan?'

"'Well,' said Jamadar, 'I can't do it alone. I can help, but we must have a Holy Man from the Temple of Juggernaut. And it will cost money—two hundred rupees at least.'

"Well, to make a long story short, I agreed to pay the money, and give Jamadar a hundred rupees for himself if he could drive the Devil out satisfactorily, and induce the people to remain. But the job had to be done clean: no cure, no pay. The Holy Man came, the people went round the works in a big procession with images of Vishnu, Siva, Gambati, and all the rest. They sacrificed twelve young goats, and sprinkled the blood over the furnace. Then the Holy Man announced that Satan had been expelled, and all went well for two days. Then there was a fresh outbreak, and twelve men died. The survivors began to show funk again, but Jamadar proved conclusively that twelve was less than twenty-five, and that the tail-end mortality was caused by the stench the Devil had left behind when expelled. That satisfied the natives, and we had no further casualties. A couple of days afterwards the rain came down and cleaned the ore-pits from which the men drank. When the rain ceased, I gave Keneram Sirdar, the leader of a gang of aborigines—men upon whom the Hindoos look down as unclean, men who eat pork—ten rupees to drive his pigs through the ore-pits. There was a horrible uproar, and Keneram had to run for his life. But they would drink out of the ore-pits again, and I put a fakir at the tank of filtered water to hand out the drinks. He was a greater attraction than any barmaid in London, and we never had any more trouble."

—*The Ironmonger.*

Divine Anti-Teetotalism.

The Book that fills men's minds with fears,
That mystifies and muddles,
Says Jahveh likes the cup that cheers,
Inebriates and fuddles.

The advocates of H_2O.
(They're mostly Christian croakers)
Take Scripture as their "text-book," though
The Book's more like a "soaker's."

To read the volume, one would think
(Don't fancy I'm a fibber)
There's vice in one who doesn't drink,
And virtue in a bibber.

When Captain Noah left the Ark,
Like "salts" that land at Dover,
He went and had a drunken lark,
Got more than "half seas over."

The fumes ascended to his head
(His cask he'd drained and dried it);
He then rolled home and went to bed,
But went to sleep *outside it.*

His son came in and saw his pa
While in a state of nudeness.
(I'm quoting from the Word of Jah,
So pray excuse my rudeness.)

The boozer rose from off his bunk,
Rose up an addled brain 'un;
Because his son had seen him drunk,
He cursed his grandson Canaan.

Now Noah was a "perfect" man,
God's friend, says Holy "Nosey";
The moral's therefore, Fetch the can,
Fill up, and "pass the rosy."

. . . . . .

The Son of God, who came to save
Mankind—but didn't do it—
No temperance lecture ever gave:
If drink's a curse, He knew it.

O Christian friends, I must be frank:
According to the spinners
Of Gospel yarns, your Savior "drank"
With publicans and sinners.

He also at a marriage made
Some wine, a lot of firkins;
Then why should Christians scorn the trade
Of Barclay, Bass, and Perkins?

A friend of Christ, whose name was Paul,
Who formerly was flouting,
Through getting sun-stroke had a "call"
For scribbling and for spouting.

He wrote to Tim, his friend, one day:
"Drink H_2O. no longer,
But for your stomach's sake, I pray,
Take something that is stronger."

. . . . . .

A pious church or chapel goer
Celebrates the supper
Ordained by One who's left the "lower"
Circle for the "upper."

Some cheap and nasty port, that's priced
At eighteen pence per bottle,
Becomes the precious Blood of Christ
While passing through a throttle.

I've shown that total abstinence
Is wicked—anti-Christian;
No one possessed of common sense
The patent fact can question!

Ess Jay Bee.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

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Acid Drops.

THE celestial clerk of the weather, who must be one of the right-hand angels of "Providence," is keeping up the heat supply in England, as well as in France and Germany and America. Many people have died from sunstroke, and hundreds of cases have been treated in the London hospitals. But the worst sufferers of all are the poor horses. It is sad to see them sweating and panting and ready to drop. Very often they do drop, and after a lot of suffering they pass off to the knacker's yard. This summer is like last summer, only more so. If the present tropical weather continues, a good many of us will feel like Ingersoll, who went as far as he could down a hot mine and then ran back, and, on being asked where he was going, said he was going to hell to cool off.

In spite of the sweltering heat, from 80 to 90 in the shade, a terrific hailstorm was arranged by "Providence" for the benefit of Northampton. Some of the hailstones were as big as hen's eggs. The town was literally bombarded, and suffered more in six minutes than it would have done if the Boers had besieged it for six weeks.

"Providence" allowed a clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Saunderson, of Brington Rectory, Huntingdon, to die suddenly from the great heat in a railway carriage. For one thing befalleth them, yea they have all one breath; as the Atheist dieth so dieth the parson, and more so, for the Atheist dieth not so readily, being generally endowed with a greater gift of common sense, which explaineth his being an Atheist.

More "Providence." A Japanese volcano, Mount Azuma, which caused such great loss of life in 1888, has suddenly broken out again and killed or seriously injured two hundred persons. This is a good illustration of the late Mr. Gladstone's theory of the beautiful way in which "Providence" had fitted the earth for man's habitation.

Early in the morning of Sunday, June 10, a woman was found wandering on Clapham Common. She was stark naked and terribly burnt about the body. She refused to give any account of herself, and foul play was suspected. But before her death, which occurred some weeks later, she confessed that she had "studied the Bible too deeply," and had tortured her body to purify her soul. According to the testimony at the inquest, she had been doing this for some time, cutting herself occasionally with a table-knife. The jury returned a verdict of "misadventure," and found that the poor young woman was suffering from "a morbid state of mind, brought about by the overstudy of religious matters." Such cases used to be common in the old ages of faith. What are now called madwomen were then distinguished female saints.

The Birmingham Liberal Association, with a view to taking the wind out of the sails of the Church party, has adopted the proposed new program of religious instruction in the Board schools, but only after a long and animated discussion and the moving of several amendments. The following resolution was carried by (it is said) a large majority:—"That this meeting of the General Committee is of opinion that a short religious service conducted daily under the authority of a School Board through its teachers, consisting of—(1) The reading and repetition of selected passages of Scripture; (2) The singing of a hymn; (3) The repetition of the Lord's Prayer; should be substituted for the present voluntary religious instruction twice a week by outside agencies." This amounts to a revolution in the curriculum. The school teachers are to be turned into amateur parsons; and the Lord's Prayer, one of the most ridiculous documents in existence, is to be uttered or muttered by the children, who, if they are taught ethics at all in school, should be taught something in harmony with the best thought of the present age.

We note that the passages of Scripture the children will read are to be "selected." By whom is not stated. Still, the word "selected" shows a recognition of the fact that it will not do nowadays to let children read the Bible at hazard, and that it is necessary to guard their minds against the too frequent filth and brutality of the Blessed Book.

The Birmingham Board Teachers' Association has passed a resolution approving of the new "progressive policy." Heaven save the mark! There is nothing progressive about it. They mean the new Chapel policy, as opposed to the Church policy, only they prefer not to say so. Moreover, they know on which side their bread is buttered. They also know that the Church party would break up School Boards and Board schools if it could.

The great Christian Endeavor Convention which has been boomed for months is now a thing of the past. The best description of it would be "a week of religious intoxication." It will leave little impression behind it, for, apart from drawing together crowds of Christians, it is difficult to see what the Convention has accomplished. The Deity must have had enough of it the first day, for the affair opened with an "all day long" prayer meeting at Wesley's Chapel. As, however, different leaders took charge of different hours, possibly relays of angels were told off to listen to the praying Endeavorers. Of course, all the prayers were duly answered. The day concluded with a sermon on the text, "Follow after love." Possibly the parson had in view the ceaseless wranglings of the sects, as Marie Corelli must have had when she with pointed significance dedicated her latest novel "to all those Churches who quarrel in the name of Christ."

One of the visitors was a Dr. Clark, who had just come from China, where he admitted he "had to carry a revolver." He omitted to explain how he reconciled this with Christ's command to "resist not evil."

The most noticeable feature of the meetings was the absolute sameness of the speeches. Not a flash of originality or wit brightened the severe solemnity of the gatherings. Even Mr. Hugh Price Hughes could say nothing new, but worked off so-called jokes that the writer heard him repeat a dozen years ago.

Rev. W. K. Chaplin greeted the Endeavorers "for what they are going to accomplish." Christians are always great on what they are "going to do." The Endeavorers once upon a time "were going to" convert Ingersoll, but it didn't come off.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes proposed to postpone further religious controversies till they met in heaven, and the Christian Endeavorers cheered. Evidently the author of the *Atheist Shoemaker* wants to jump the day of judgment.

The great Dr. Parker recommended Americans to nominate Sheldon for the Presidency of the States. Christ's kingdom "is not of this world," but Christ's disciples are always on the track of the world's plums.

The Christian Endeavorers claim to number three and a half millions. And all this in a few years. But what does it mean? Simply this—that three and a half millions of Christians of various denominations have affiliated to a new organisation. That doesn't involve the presence of a single additional Christian on this planet. The whole thing reminds us of a theatre army, which crosses the stage, works round behind the scenes, and crosses the stage again, and looks a multitude when it is only a handful.

There was no Jesus Christ at the Christian Endeavor Convention to do the multiplication of food and drink trick. Nor was any disciple present with the miraculous power which the Master promised to those who believed in him. They had therefore to patronise a vulgar victualling department. In one day they consumed 60,000 bottles of mineral water, 25,000 buns, 20,000 rolls, 600 large slabs of cake, 30,000 veal and ham pies, tons of meat and hogsheads of milk. It was a teetotal orgie, and the Gospel was mixed up with it all.

A farmer at Amiens has just been immured in a lunatic asylum. He believed that all the pigeons in a huge dovecot on his farm were inhabited by the spirits of his departed ancestors and kinsmen, and did the hospitable by throwing grain, etc., to the appreciative birds from morning to night.

The *Rock* is very much disturbed over a "bicycle gymkhana" held in connection with the Bi-century of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. It suggests that Bike-century, rather than Bi-century, is the proper term to use. And it regards with disfavor the fashion in these days of providing "something for something" in religious work. "Concerts, gymkhanas, even amateur theatricals, are called into requisition for this purpose of raising money for the work of God. Is this really 'giving to the Lord'? Is it not giving to self, to please self? I often wonder what would the early Church have thought of our modern methods of collecting funds for the progress of the Gospel. Fancy St. Paul patronising a bicycle gymkhana for providing for the evangelisation of the heathen, or St. Peter taking part in amateur theatricals to send relief to the poor Christians at Jerusalem! Neither of the amusements may be wrong *per se*, but surely it is not the way to evoke the spirit of giving to the work of the Lord to be ever trying how to give a *quid pro quo* which will draw the public, and make them open their unwilling hands."

Sabbath-breaking seems to be permissible on the Clyde if

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you are prepared to pay a penalty of £5. Sunday sailing has been resumed for the season. At Dunoon, we learn, there was a repetition of the stirring scenes of three years ago. On the arrival of the steamer, the *Heather Bell*, the Castle Hill, Esplanade, and other points of vantage were crowded with spectators. Two or three passengers leaped from the paddle-boxes to the pier, and a gangway was promptly commandeered, by which a few more landed, and the steamer left, those on board exchanging cheers with the crowd on shore. The pier gates being closed, the passengers scaled a ten-feet high railing near the goods entrance. The police did not interfere with the passengers' landing, though a prosecution may yet follow, the byelaws providing a penalty of £5 for every passenger landed between midnight on Saturday and midnight on Sunday.

The bigotry of the Yarmouth Watch Committee is something astounding. In defiance of the Corporation's recent resolution, it has renewed the Sunday trading prosecutions, and the other day nearly thirty cases came before the magistrates. Strong exception was taken to the proceedings by a minority of the Bench, who suggested a 3d. fine without costs. By a majority, however, a conviction was recorded in every case, and various oystermen, tobacconists, and fruiterers were fined 14s., including costs, for each offence. Notice was given that a summons would be applied for against the Corporation for employing bands on Sundays and taking money for admission to the pier.

Southampton Harbor Board has been agitated on the question of Sunday excursions from the pier. Alderman Le Feuvre moved that they should be stopped. He said he was not a severe Sabbatarian, but he drew the line at excursions. Besides, the Board's employees should have an opportunity, and so should the general public, of attending to their religious duties. Mr. Parker seconded. He protested against the further abuse of the Sunday in the town of Southampton. Mr. Hutchens opposed. He wanted to know why people shouldn't enjoy themselves in a rational manner on Sunday. Those who objected to going down to the pier had only to stop away. Alderman Emanuel also opposed. He thought that people were entitled to a little relaxation after a week's hard work. Mr. W. Beavis wanted to know what right the mover and seconder of the resolution had to prevent him from going where he liked. He didn't propose to interfere with churches and chapels. Mr. Radford was in favor of stopping the excursions. He was great on "the thin end of the wedge" argument. Where were they going to stop? By-and-bye they would have horse-races on the Lord's Day. Well, the Board divided, and the Sabbatarian motion was lost by twelve votes to six. Poor bigots! They have our sympathy.

Just now it may be of interest to notice the enormous amounts which religious enthusiasts subscribed last year to the various foreign and other missionary societies. The following are some of the totals exclusive of Bible, tract, school, and similar societies:—Church Missionary Society (including £80,619 of centenary fund), £404,905; Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, £136,846; London Missionary Society, £157,910; Wesleyan Missionary Society, £133,787; Baptist Missionary Society, £77,692; China Inland Mission, £53,197; United Methodist Free Churches Foreign Mission, £15,483; Primitive Methodist Foreign Mission, £10,751; Moravian Missions (whole income £79,940), British contribution, £15,090; Church of Scotland Foreign Mission, including Women's Missions, Jews, Colonial, etc., £58,696; Free Church of Scotland Foreign Mission, including Women's Missions, Jews, Colonial, etc., £129,015; United Presbyterian Foreign Mission, including Women's Missions, Jews, Colonial, etc., £62,735; Irish Presbyterian Foreign Mission, including Women's Missions, Jews, Colonial, etc., £33,297; English Presbyterian Foreign Mission, including Women's Missions, Jews, etc., £28,571; Universities Mission, £37,549; Friends' Foreign Mission, £12,852; London Society for Missions to the Jews, £40,342; British Society for Missions to the Jews, £6,430; Mildmay Jewish Mission, £8,800; Barbican Jewish Mission (including £3,500 special building fund), £4,846; North African Mission, £8,800; South American Missionary Society, £18,086; "Regions Beyond" Missionary Union, £23,640; Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, £67,669; Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, £22,282; Bible Lands Mission Aid Society, £2,162; Waldensian Missions (British contributions), £4,746; Mission to Lepers, £11,298.

"Millionaires who don't believe in Parsons" is the heading to one of the notes in Mr. Joseph Hatton's entertaining weekly *Cigarette Papers*. There are, he says, "parsons and parsons. Curiously enough, there are millionaires who have money to give away who don't believe in parsons. Mr. Hugh Price Hughes in the *Methodist Times* admits this. Though he does not mention Mr. Carnegie by name, it is plain that he wants the Scotch-American to assist in restoring the Acropolis at Athens. He urges this because, though Mr. Carnegie and Mr. Passmore Edwards seem not to believe in parsons, they go in for promoting education in every possible way. I knew Josiah Mason, the Birmingham millionaire, who built, endowed, and filled with orphans one of the most perfect institutions of the kind extant. He left it to the Birmingham Corporation, on condition that no minister of religion of any denomination should have anything to do with its management."

"We have Stigginses," continues Mr. Hatton, "in the Church as well as Stigginses in the Dissenting Community. The clerical agitators who are obstructing every movement for humanising the Sabbath bring discredit upon their cloth, and keep far more people out of church than they attract thither."

"Then there are the parsons who neglect their sacred calling, and devote themselves to business; the stock-broking parson with an intermediary, the newspaper parson who haunts Fleet-street seeking for books to review, the literary parson who edits magazines, the parson who fills journalistic positions to the neglect of his parish, the musical-critic parson, the sporting parson, and all the rest.....The man who makes a business of the Church for social and other purposes outside his real duties, and the other who is ambitious to make a show of his office, and who breaks his ordination oaths, and still takes the money of the Church—those men will have a very serious account to settle on the last day, and, in the meantime, ought to be made to settle up on this side the grave."

One more note by Mr. Hatton is specially worth reproducing for its spirit of manly common sense: "I think if it had fallen to my lot to be a parson, and therefore a preacher, I would not have left all the teaching to the Press. Is it the denunciation of a cruel sport, it is the newspaper that has to be the medium of public action. Is it the exposure of some great City abuse, the warning of men and women against luxury, the exposure of a commercial trickery that saps the nation's naturally high sense of honor in race-course and Stock Exchange betting; is it the bribing of officials in St. Pancras, the blind fight of the upper middle classes with fashion to keep up appearances, the disloyalty of some politicians, the treason of others, the crowding of alien paupers into the East-end of London, and the consequent beggary of English laborers and skilled workmen; what has the Established pulpit to say about such things? Nothing. It launches out against breaches of Church discipline, or goes on mumbling its old texts and ancient beliefs, while the great world is surging on."

Sickening disclosures were made in a breach of promise case against a Salvationist last week. The "saved" individual—Henry James Parkins by name—living at Drayton Park, Holloway, did his best to seduce a Salvationist lass whom he met at the Holloway "barracks." He gave her a ring at Christmas, 1898, and at the same time said a prayer that they might be a blessing to each other in the future. Defendant in all his letters breathed religion, and was always quoting Scripture; but the true nature of the man, said counsel, was shown by his conduct when at Clacton-on-Sea, where he tried unsuccessfully to take liberties with the plaintiff. In consequence of the treatment plaintiff had received, she became ill, lost her situation, and had suffered considerable pecuniary loss. A verdict of £25 damages was returned against him.

On account of opinions expressed in his *Resurrection*, Count Tolstoi has been excommunicated from the Orthodox Christian Church, and it is thought he will refer to the matter in his forthcoming book, *The White Slavery*. He takes no payment for his literary work, and his writings become public property as soon as they are published. Fortunately, his wife is rich, and humors the Count's whims. He is a vegetarian, but at times the craving for flesh becomes too strong for him, and he grabs an enormous piece of meat, swallowing it in one bite.

So we have gone back three or four centuries. Once more Rome is displaying, though in a feeble form, its ancient despotism. Dr. Bagshawe, Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham, has addressed to his clergy a circular prohibiting them, under pain of *ipso facto suspension*, from publishing, in the Press or otherwise, *reflections on himself or any of the clergy* under his charge. The editor of a Roman Catholic weekly paper telegraphed to the Bishop as follows: "To the Lord Bishop of Nottingham—Reported your lordship has issued instructions to priests about writing to Press. Will you favor us with copy for publication? EDITOR." The following day the Bishop replied: "Sir,—It would almost appear from your telegram that you think the Press and the public are the divinely-constituted judges of a Bishop's government of his diocese. I think this attitude is one of the worst and most dangerous evils afflicting the Church of England. I cannot hinder you from usurping this office, but I decline to be a party to your doing so. I am, sir, your obedient servant, EDWARD, Bishop of Nottingham." What Dr. Bagshawe would do if he could "*hinder*" any Press opinions or comments on the public actions of himself or his

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clergy does not appear. Probably he would burn the critics, in accordance with the mediæval custom of his Church.

One would think, says the *People*, that the solicitude of the Churches for news of their missionaries in China would allay their asperity in regard to the Sunday paper, and the truth is the vast majority of religionists of all denominations have no hand in the narrow policy of the "over-righteous," who too often air their "professed" religion in a cheap persecution of newsagents. Fortunately, their attempted tyrannous use of an obsolete Act of Parliament only promotes the circulation of the *People*, which is the experience of every attempt to interfere with its Sunday edition.

More Christian harmony! The Rev. Alexander Connell, a true-blue Protestant, protests against Lord Salisbury's "cruel suggestion" that missionaries place their reliance partly on God and partly on the gunboat. He declares that the missionaries are too pious to do anything of the kind. That is to say, the Protestant missionaries. As for the Catholic missionaries, he says they are at the bottom of most of the trouble in China. Codlin's the friend, not Short.

The venerable Dr. Guinness Rogers also stands up for the missionaries in China. "The missionary," he says, "is the one man who cannot help being there, being impelled by a divine necessity." The trader might keep away from China and lose business, but the missionary must go there to save souls. Yes, and anything else he can get.

Rev. A. B. Lloyd, one of the Church Society's missionaries, has written a book on *Dwarf Land and Cannibal Country*, in which he declares that the blacks of that part of Africa are the jolliest men on earth and "when not interfered with they are perfectly harmless." "That the worst savages in Africa," the *Daily News* says, "are neither poison-shooting pygmies nor cannibal Bangwas, but white officials in the service of a Christian government—that of Belgium—becomes painfully evident from Mr. Lloyd's testimony."

The Birmingham *Weekly Mercury* gives a glowing account of a recent Theosophical discourse by Mrs. Besant. According to the reporter, it was a wonderful intellectual effort; it was "witchery," it was "magic"—which we daresay it was—and it "sparkled with sincerity and was radiant with Faith, Hope, and Charity." They did not write in this way of Mrs. Besant when she opposed the religious prejudices of her countrymen, especially of her countrywomen, and talked the language of Secularism and common sense.

Mrs. Besant said that man was evolving new powers of vibration that he might vibrate with the vibrations of the universe. We suppose we must take her word for it, whether we understand it or not. But we venture to say that she talked sheer nonsense when she introduced the Roentgen Rays by way of illustrating the power Theosophists had of seeing through the opaque. A clever woman like Mrs. Besant can easily play these tricks with half-educated people, who want somebody to pander to their superstitious emotions.

Dr. G. C. Lorimer, of Tremont Temple, Boston, U.S.A., preached last Sunday in Dr. Clifford's chapel at Westbourne Park. At the close of his sermon he said that the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews died in fear, but the fear of death had been immolated by the glory of Jesus Christ. Now, if this gentleman (Dr. Lorimer, not Jesus Christ) is honest and sincere, he must be very ignorant. It is not true that the Greeks and Romans died in fear. This is proved by their poetry and their epitaphs. Nor is it true that the fear of death was destroyed by Christianity. It was rather intensified and made definite by the dread of everlasting hell. Indeed, it may be almost said that the fear of death is peculiar to Christians. There is very little of it amongst Brahmans, Buddhists, Mohammedans, and Confucians. "Prepare to meet thy God" has been the burden of innumerable Christian sermons. And the way to heaven is narrow, and the road to hell is wide.

"If ever they wanted to know what the Devil wished people to think, they should buy the *Westminster Gazette*." So said a clergyman at a Church education meeting in Yarmouth. Our contemporary reproduces the man of God's observations in order that its readers may be "duly warned."

Good old Papa Pecci, God Almighty's vicegerent at the Vatican, has uttered many pathetic things in favor of the working men and their claim to decent wages and hours of labor. These little outbursts, of course, cost him nothing. When his own pockets are touched his Holiness cries out as loudly as any capitalist. Recently his Swiss Guard petitioned for an increase of pay, on account of the increase of work laid upon them during the present Jubilee year; during which year, by the way, the Pope is raking in piles of money from east, west, north, and south, and every other point of the compass. Well, what was the result of this petition? The man who got it up was dismissed for "insubordination," and all who signed it were threatened with "expulsion." That is how the Pope believes in good wages—when he has to pay them himself.

What a sarcasm it is when science is employed to call people to church! This has happened down at Runwell, in Essex. The rector, finding a difficulty in obtaining bell-ringers—perhaps while the "pubs." are open—has invented an electric apparatus to do the work. He just switches on the current, and the bells go ding-dong; or, as the Italian monk put it, *dando dando*, which meaneth "give, give."

Chancellor McCracken, of New York University, has been speaking of "bald Materialism," and the local *Truthseeker* (one of our most valued exchanges) wants to know what relation there is between spirituality and hair. "Are we," it asks, "to think of new truths as bald because the old lies are bearded and hoary?"

North Lew is the place where "the devil died of cold," and his remains are said to be buried beneath the preaching cross there. Berenger sang "The Devil is Dead," but he did not know where Old Nick was buried. Nor did he exactly know what the Devil died of, though he might have guessed it was a bad cold, for an inhabitant of hell must find every other place draughty.

Nature.

I CARE for nought in all the world but my resistless will,
And though men pray to many gods I give no answer still.
For I am Love, and Life, and Death, and Hate—all things that be
Are but the creatures of my brain who have their power from me.
The pleasure that you have I buy by others' grief and pain,
And when the soul is overstrained I turn the scale again.
I starve the young birds in their nests, I make the aged die,
I look on love and pain and joy—I look, and what care I?
With strange beliefs and senseless creeds I hold the world in fee
That none may learn in bitterness, *There are no gods but me!*
For vile to me and things of scorn are all their worshippings
(Those small, brief creatures of the clay who yearn for angels' wings!).
In mockery I bid them pray and hymn they know not what;
Alike to me are shaven priest, and king, and drunken sot.
In mockery I take them all, I bid them live and die;
I look on love and pain and joy—I look, and what care I?
In peace I play with pestilence, and when my pleasure's o'er
I call on Greed and Avarice to loose the dogs of war
To watch them tear the throats of men and feed upon the blood—
I, who am Mother unto all, I love the fiery flood.
For youth is youth, and age is age, and I would have them both;
I win to ways of bitterness the maiden nothing loth,
I charm the aged sage to sin; aye! all the World is mine;
I trip the priest upon the path, and leave him to repine.
For I am Love, and Life, and Death, and Hate—all things that be,
And Superstition, of them all, is dearest unto me,
For this it is that makes men blind and holds the world in fee;
Though yet 'twill learn in bitterness—there are no gods but me.

—*Sydney Bulletin.* WILL M. FLEMING.

The Sunday Bigot.

"I SEE you are carrying a petition in favor of Sunday trading," said the long-nosed man, severely; and the smart young man turned on him: "You're wrong," he said; "it's against the singling out of a certain class." "Ah! doesn't matter," replied the other party; "you evidently countenance the desecration of the Sabbath, that I can see." "I can see something as well," snapped the smart young man; "you're a bigot—s-s-sh—don't jump like that—you are, really. You read your Monday's newspaper that was printed on the Sunday; you wear clothes probably made on the same day; you drink milk vended on Sundays; and if you have money you will hold shares in one of the local works that are in full swing on the Sabbath. You are, by your appearance, pretty well off, and, consequently, don't know what it is to feel the pinch of poverty, and to have to sell a few pennyworths of sweets to help pay your rent. In short, you are a hypocrite and a ——tut, tut, don't have a fit. I hope I have made myself quite understood—I see that I have—You won't sign the petition, eh? So long!" and the smart young man went down a side street, leaving the long-nosed party clawing the air.

—*South Wales Daily News.*

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The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stonecutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 29, at 7, West Ham Branch (Stratford-grove), Freethought Demonstration.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—July 29, at 7, West Ham Branch (Stratford-grove), Freethought Demonstration.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

F. E. WILLIS (Birmingham) informs us that the Bull Ring lecturer referred to by us last week was not Mr. H. Percy Ward, but Mr. Hanks. This gentleman is also a prominent Socialist, hence the "red tie." This correspondent is thanked for cuttings.

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always very welcome.

W. TOWNSEND.—You can order Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology* from the Freethought Publishing Company. The price is 8s. 6d. net, or 9s. carriage free.

J. F. HAMPSON.—Very glad to hear that you have got over the unexpected difficulty, and hope you will be as prosperous as you deserve to be. Thanks for your promised donation to the Twentieth Century Fund. We note your desire to see "a long and strong list of donors."

E. SELF.—Pleased to hear that you intend to interest your friends in the Twentieth Century Fund.

ADRIENNE VEIGELE (Miss), the Healtheries, 119A Praed-street, Paddington, W., supplies the *Freethinker* and exhibits a contents-sheet.

W. H. SPIVEY.—Your letter to hand with enclosure. See our special notice. Thanks.

H. PERCY WARD.—The correction had already been made. But thanks.

D. FRANKEL.—See paragraph. We wish your Branch all success.

T. OLLERENSHAW.—Many thanks. In our next. See notice.

E. S.—Pleased to hear that a friend of yours gave you the *Freethinker*, and that you found it just to your taste. You say you would have taken it long ago if you had known of it. That is one of our difficulties, getting people to know of it. With regard to the books, you might read the following three by Mr. Foote to begin with—*Bible Romances*, *Bible Heroes*, and the *Book of God*.

A. HURCUM (Cardiff) is astonished that anyone could perceive a reflection on Charles Bradlaugh in our article on "Blank Atheism."

W. H. FRY.—You will see from our note to the gentleman's letter that we don't think such a controversy worth pursuing.

T. E. (Southampton).—Thanks for cutting. See "Acid Drops."

W. J. NEWEY (Birmingham) reports that his newsagent's sale of the *Freethinker* has risen from three to twenty copies weekly.

J. T. IVES.—Of course the smallest contributions will be welcome to the Fund.

A. F. BULLOCK.—Address altered as requested. The other matter stands over for a week.

W. MUMBY.—Thanks. We shall quote from your letter in our next issue, when the new Fund will be dealt with at some length.

F. H. WATTS.—See paragraph. Thanks.

ALERT.—We are obliged.

J. C. BANKS.—Your letter received. More in our next.

E. WRIGHT.—You cannot do better than refer to Dr. Giles's *Christian Records* advertised in our "Remainder" List.

F. J. GOULD.—Your valued article has to stand over for a week. We were already overset when it arrived.

W. COX.—You must please send a Lecture Notice if you want the outdoor meetings announced again.

S. JOHNSON.—The new edition of the *Bible Handbook* is now on sale at the Freethought Publishing Company's office. We think you will find it is a book that every Freethinker should keep by him, as well as a very useful volume to place in the hands of a Christian.

RECEIVED.—Liberator—Munsey's Magazine—South Wales Daily News—Lucifer—Truthseeker (New York)—Crescent—Ethical World—New Century—Echo—Christianity and Mythology, by J. M. Robertson (Watts & Co.)—Two Worlds—Secular Thought—Torch of Reason—Labor Chronicle—Evening Express (Cardiff)—Blue Grass Blade.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

IT was my intention to write at length on this Fund for the present number of the *Freethinker*. But the tropical heat in sweltering London has taken some effect upon me, and I don't care at the moment to face more work than is quite necessary. I am also afraid that, in such climatic conditions, almost anything I could say would be practically lost upon my readers. These are two good reasons for a postponement. By next week the heat may have abated, or we may all have got more used to it, if we are lucky enough to survive. I may state at once, however, that I have received several replies to the preliminary circular I sent out, with promised donations (and a few paid up) from £25 downwards. A list of these, with extracts from the donors' letters, will appear in the next issue of this journal, as an appendix to my authorised appeal on behalf of the Fund. Those who wish to have the honor of being included in the first list should communicate with me by Monday. G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

THE fourth of this year's series of Freethought Demonstrations took place on Sunday evening in Hyde Park. As the brake could not be taken near the spot where the people congregate, the West London Branch's large lecture-stand was made use of by the speakers. A dozen chairs formed a semi-circle in front of the platform—if we may call it so, for there is only room for one person at a time upon it. Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, of Chicago, were again present, and there were two other American visitors—Mr. and Mrs. Levi, of Cincinnati, who entertained Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts when they were together in that city, some three years and a half ago. Mr. Schaller acted as chairman, and Mr. W. Heaford was the first speaker. Then came Mr. Cohen, then Mr. Watts, and finally Mr. Foote. Fortunately the evening air was a little cooler, although it was still hot enough; and the audience stood for the best part of two hours, listening with unabated interest to the various speeches on Freethought and Secularism. There was an immense crowd before Mr. Foote concluded his address, just as the shades of night were beginning to fall upon the scene. All the speakers were in good form, and the great meeting was orderly and appreciative from the first moment to the last. Every point was taken up readily, prompt laughter greeted every witty or humorous sally, and warm applause marked the conclusion of each speech; indeed, there was quite an ovation at the finish, and hearty cheers were raised as the Demonstration party drove away in Mr. Wilson's brake.

Mrs. Foote did not arrive in time to get into the centre of the meeting. She entered the Park just as her husband was speaking, and she could hear his voice at the Marble Arch gates, although (of course) she could not discriminate his words at that distance. Moving about on the outside of the crowd, she was the unsuspected hearer of some curious things about the "wicked" man with whom she is so closely associated. Two opposition speakers, with microscopic audiences, were indulging freely in lies and libels; in fact, they indulged in nothing else, and "Foote, Foote, Foote" was the burden of their wretched songs. Near one of these Gentle-Jesusites, right on the edge of the big Freethought crowd, a man was listening with both ears, and another man—probably belonging to the sweet band of mercy—kept talking to him. "Ah," he said, "I reckon that's his game"—smacking his pocket. The man he spoke to made no reply, but went on listening. "Yes," said the amateur critic, "I reckon he gets a tidy bit for it." Still no answer. "Well,"

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the critic resumed, "he wouldn't stand up there talking for nothing. *I* wouldn't talk like that for nothing." "Well," said the taciturn man at last, "I wish you'd shut up, and that man there too (meaning the Gentle-Jesusite), for I've not seen this Foote before and I want to hear what he's saying."

The amateur critic wouldn't talk like that for nothing—which, by the way, Mr. Foote was doing. "No," said Mr. Cohen, when he heard of it, "and he might just as well have said he wouldn't talk like that for something."

One good Christian said that Mr. Foote ought to be snowballed. It was a capital idea. What a pity it wasn't carried out! Snowballing would have been a treat in that weather.

Probably some of the Gentle-Jesusites stood on the outskirts of the meeting in order to drop their malignant nonsense into the ears around them. There was a clergyman, however, listening to Mr. Foote with close attention. He didn't exactly applaud, but he laughed heartily at some of the jocularities.

Monday's *Daily News* referred to last Sunday's meetings in Hyde Park, and singled out the West London Mission's ten-hours' entertainment for special praise. But it did not so much as allude to the Freethought Demonstration. This ostrich policy has always been pursued by the *Daily News*. The Nonconformist Conscience doesn't like to hear of great and successful Freethought meetings. So if they are not mentioned they didn't happen. See?

The fifth of these Freethought Demonstrations will take place this evening (July 29) in connection with the new West Ham Branch at Stratford Grove at 7 o'clock. There will be a good list of speakers, including Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Cohen, and the brake will be used as a platform.

"Mimnermus's" article on Ernest Renan is reproduced from our columns in the *Liberator* (Melbourne), also Mr. G. L. Mackenzie's "The Priests of Prey."

Secular Thought (Toronto) has not been reaching us for some time. The last number just to hand, dated June 30, reproduces a portion of Mr. Foote's article on "Blank Atheism." We are glad to get Editor Ellis's paper again. In our opinion he well sustains its character. His editorial notes are always interesting.

The Cardiff *Evening Express* devotes a column of small type to the report of a conversation between an invalided missionary and a layman who is an Agnostic. The latter makes some strong and caustic remarks about the missionary business in China. That column will be an eye-opener to the more pious readers of our Welsh contemporary.

The South Shields Branch friends hold their annual picnic in Holywell Dene to-day (Sunday). Four brakes have been engaged, and with very few exceptions the seats are all booked. Anyone desirous of not being left behind had better give timely notice. Given fine weather, they will enjoy a happy day. Newcastle and Sunderland friends are cordially invited.

The Liverpool Branch's excursion to Ormskirk on Sunday was a complete success. The drive was delightful, and the "Falcon" put on a good tea for the visitors, after which they strolled about viewing the various points of interest. All felt they had passed "a good time" on returning to Liverpool.

Mr. Cohen had a large and appreciative audience on Sunday afternoon in Victoria Park. His place there was taken in the evening by Mr. Davies, who also addressed a good meeting. The evening meetings in this Park are a great success in this hot weather, as more people are about when the broiling sun is declining.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectured to good audiences at Northampton on Sunday. He will join the speakers at the West Ham Freethought Demonstration this evening (July 29).

The Bethnal Green Branch Secretary reports that Mr. G. J. Warren has wiped off the balance due to him as Treasurer. This is felt as a great relief, and if one or two others would be as kind as Mr. Warren the Branch would feel able to take an active part in the coming School Board elections, with a view to securing the return of a "secular education" candidate—a matter which will be considered at the approaching members' meeting.

Shakespeare and Inspiration.

NOT only is the Bible said to be inspired, but the same is said of the orator and the poet. This implies a gradual secularisation of the idea. The teacher, the enthusiast, the prophet, is no longer the oracle of an indwelling divinity. Genius has ceased to be what it once was, a spirit attending a man and speaking through him; it means no more than a natural exaltation of certain mental or moral powers. It would seem that the time is approaching when the word Inspiration will be emptied of all its supernatural meaning. When that time arrives, as it assuredly will, I very much doubt if the Bible will hold its place at the top of our literature. There are splendid things, when adequately translated, in the old Scriptures of India; and the great voices of Greece and Rome carry a high message. Nor did the vein of inspiration close with the ancients. Poets, thinkers, and moralists, as lofty as any of antiquity, have been amongst us, and only require age to mellow their golden reputations. One of them, the mightiest in the roll of fame, the magisterial genius of this planet, lived, died, and was buried in our own England. Upon his brow sits the shadow of thought beyond the scope of the bards of Israel; his eye has depth within depth, until the beholder is lost in its profundity; every passion trembles on his mobile lips; and in the corners of his mouth there lurk the subtle sprites of wit and humor—a wit as nimble as the lightning, a humor as sweet and impartial as the sunshine. His very language is divine, speaking every note from the whisper of love to the tempest of wrath, from the mother's lullaby to the hero's challenge, from the soft flutings of sylvan peace to the thunder-roll of battle and death. Let the poets and prophets of Israel approach. The mighty palace of his genius shall find them all an appropriate apartment, leaving a host of chambers to spare, in some of which the decorations are too lovely for their stern regard.

—G. W. FOOTE, "*Letters to the Clergy.*"

The Message of the Preacher.

"IF you want to gain the kingdom,"
Says the preacher, gazing round,
"Want that home in glory
Where you lay your burdens down,
Pay attention to this message,
And the heavenly city see;
Give your heart to God Almighty,
And your pocket-book to me!
"Don't be nowise discouraged
If the stony way is long;
Pass the hat around, my brother,
While we sing another song;
If you expect religion,
Salvation full and free,
Give your heart to God Almighty,
And your pocket-book to me!
"Hear the words of the blessed Jesus,
'Lay not treasures up on earth';
Give a liberal, large collection,
And receive the second birth.
When the dimes and nickles jingle,
Then we'll shout our jubilee;
Give your heart to God Almighty,
And your pocket-book to me!
"Give it all, and don't begrudge it;
Don't be holding any back;
Sacrifices must be offered
When we walk the narrow track.
Pass the hat along the benches;
Pass it slow so all can see;
Give your heart to God Almighty,
And your pocket-book to me!"

—*John Morrissey.*

His Denomination.

At the close of the service one Sunday morning the pastor of a city church went down the aisle, as was his custom, to greet the strangers in his congregation.

"You are not a member of our church," he said to one of them.

"No, sir," replied the stranger.

"Do you belong to any denomination, may I ask?"

"Well," replied the other hesitatingly, "I'm what you might call a submerged Presbyterian."

"How is that?"

"I was brought up a Presbyterian, my wife is a Methodist, my eldest daughter is a Baptist, my son is the organist at a Universalist church, my second daughter sings in an Episcopal choir, and my youngest goes to a Congregational Sunday-school."

"But you contribute, doubtless, to some one church?"

"Yes, I contribute to all of them. That is partly what submerges me."—*Youth's Companion.*

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Mind and Evolution.

ACCEPTING the doctrine of evolution, the Rev. Scott Lidgett says: "But let us, for the present, suppose this difference [the alleged intellectual, moral, and physical difference between man and the lower animals] to be explained by ordinary natural causes, and the difference to be bridged over by this means; that man, including his higher powers, stands at the summit of a purely natural development, simply fulfilling prophecies uttered by creatures below him, what then? Would it destroy, or even injure, the spiritual and religious view of human life?" Mr. Lidgett answers this question by laying down four propositions. First he says:—

> "However far the doctrine of evolution may be extended, and its evidence completed, nothing has been done by it to destroy the fundamental difference between the conscious and the non-conscious. Mind is distinct from matter, and as inconvertible into matter, when the method of evolution is accepted, as it was before."

Let us examine these points. It is quite clear that if the human mind is the result of a "never-ceasing evolution," it will not only injure, but destroy altogether, the ordinary Christian notion of the "spiritual and religious view of human life." The ordinary Christian believes that the Bible teaches that man was a special creation, that into his nostrils alone "the Lord breathed the breath of life, and man became a living soul." On the assumption, therefore, that man has risen from the lower animals, it would be necessary to inquire at what point in the development of the animal does the "spiritual and religious element" begin to manifest itself. Suppose we dismiss, as unworthy of argument, the question as to whether fishes, reptiles, or birds have a "spiritual and religious element" in them, and take only mammals, we may then inquire at what precise point in their development did these extraordinary qualities first make their appearance; and, if they were perfectly natural products, why, then, should they be spoken of as entirely different from anything else nature has done—in fact, as being supernatural? What faculties has man by which he can distinguish the supernatural from the natural? Is there any man with knowledge so vast that he knows precisely the limit of nature's capabilities? Can he scale her heights or fathom her depths so completely as to be able to say, "So far nature can go, and no farther?"

The Rev. Scott Lidgett, however, argues that evolution "fails to destroy the fundamental difference between the conscious and the non-conscious." Mr. Lidgett will no doubt admit that evolution does teach that not only is man not distinct from the lower animals, but that all species of animals and all species of plants are artificial groups gliding one into the other, just as into their gradual development they evolved out of one another; and evolution also teaches that the line of demarcation between the animal and the vegetable cannot be drawn, nor can we say where vegetable life ends and mineral begins. And in like manner the line between the living and the non-living is equally hard to define; in fact, we are able to go so far down as to come across protoplasmic masses that may be said to hover on the borderline between the organic and the inorganic.

The Rev. Scott Lidgett goes on to affirm that "mind is distinct from matter." He does not, however, define what he means by the term "mind." But it is quite clear that he regards it as an entity—a something that exists within man, that can exist apart from the material organisation. Let us see what Dr. Büchner said on this subject:—

> "The brain is the seat and organ of thought; its size, shape, and structure are in exact proportion to the magnitude and power of its intellectual functions. Comparative anatomy furnishes us in this respect with the clearest proof by showing the prevailing law, that through all classes of animals, up to man, the intellectual energy is in proportion to the size and material quality of the brain. Animals which possess no brain proper, but merely nervous ganglia, or rudimentary brains, generally occupy the lowest place in relation to mental activity, and appear rather to vegetate than to live. Man, on the contrary, occupying the highest place, as an intellectual being, has absolutely and relatively the largest brain" (*Force and Matter*, p. 162).

Bastian, in his admirable work, *The Brain as an Organ of Mind*, demonstrates that not only do the size and quality of the brain have to be taken into account in determining the value of the brain, but also the complexity of the convolutions. Now, if mind is something separate and distinct from matter, can it exist and act without matter?

Spinoza has an axiom which runs thus: "Two things having nothing in common cannot be the cause of, or affect, one another." If matter has nothing in common with mind, how do they come to be associated the one with the other? And while we know that matter can, and does, exist apart from mind, we do not know of mind existing apart from matter. Can a man think without a brain? If a man gets concussion of the brain, what becomes of the activities of the mind while he lies unconscious? "The greatest thinker of the age," says Tuttle, "may in one hour during illness lose all his intelligence; in advanced age he enters a second childhood. The decay of the body induces decay of the mental faculties, which being extinguished with the last breath, like a lamp without sufficient oil, emitting only some feeble glimmers." Again, Valentine says: "If both hemispheres of a mammal are removed in layers, mental activity will be reduced in proportion to the mass removed. Perfect unconsciousness is generally the result if the loss extends to the ventricles." (Quoted by Büchner.)

Now, if the mind has nothing in common with matter, surely the removal of the hemispheres of the brain should not interfere with the thinking power of either the animal or man. Cannot the mind think without the instrument called the brain? If it cannot, how is it to carry on its work when the brain ceases to perform its functions? And, further, if the "soul" and the "mind" are but synonymous terms, then, by parity of reasoning, the soul in any other existence will require an organisation and a brain through which to manifest itself.

The third argument stated by the Rev. Scott Lidgett is perhaps a little more subtle than the others, but I do not see that it furnishes any stronger evidence for putting man into an entirely "different realm" from the lower animals, although it certainly does demonstrate what no Evolutionist would for a moment dispute—viz., that the development of man's mind, under rational conditions, does place him on a higher plane, in every sense, than the highest among the lower animals, or even the lowest of mankind. This is the way Mr. Lidgett puts his argument:—

> "And, again, the study of mind in its highest human embodiment must be carried out by means of mental science, and not of natural history. What mind is must be found out by examining mind. It is no use to offer the natural history of its descent, or the account of its physical or physiological accompaniments. It is of slight service, if we are to study its contents, to observe its manifestations in the lower animals."

He goes on to affirm that we must study man at his highest, not in his physiological but in his psychological development, to understand exactly what mind is. Our answer to this statement is that no study of the human mind can be considered to be complete which does not embrace a study of the evolution of the mental faculties from the lowest up to the highest phase of their development.

The fourth point elaborates the results of this study. The Rev. Scott Lidgett says:—

> "And when we come thus psychologically to examine the human mind, there are three great outstanding elements—reason, conscience, and religion. Reason, first aroused by material needs, steadily grows, throws off its shackles, and soars to asking the meaning of the world, and to recreate the world within itself on the basis of order, system, and purpose. That is to say, reason demands, perceives, creates a new environment for itself, and that environment is a universal mind, speaking to it in terms of order, system, purpose, which alone reason can understand, and which reason is driven to demand. And in the end, to the noblest men and the loftiest thinkers, only the rational is real."

If by this is meant that reason demands a consistency between subjective impressions—that is, impressions made by phenomena on the mind—and what is believed to exist objectively in the world in which "we live and move and have our being," we agree. With regard to "conscience" and "religion," it is impossible to discuss them at length now; we merely content our-

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selves by saying that we do not agree with Mr. Lidgett when he declares that "conscience asserts the awful distinction between right and wrong in conduct." In our judgment, it is the province of reason to inform us what is right or wrong in conduct.

Conscience merely informs us whether we are acting up to our convictions or not. For instance, a man's conscience allows him to have one wife in this country at a time; but in Turkey his conscience would approve of him having as many as he could afford. The subject of "evolution and religion" is so large and important a theme that we must defer our comments on this subject to another article. ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Christian Falsehoods.

I AM asked by "A. H. T." to give my authority for accusing Mr. Horton of telling a falsehood concerning J. S. Mill, and also of accusing Dean Farrar of manufacturing three out of four references for a statement concerning Roman women. I do so with pleasure. In a sermon preached at Lyndhurst-road Chapel, on the last Sunday in November, 1899, Mr. Horton is reported as saying that at the age of eighteen the idea occurred to Mill: "Now supposing all these reforms were effected .....what then? He felt that if all were realised, so much would be left unrealised, *and so little, indeed, realised* [italics mine], that the whole of life..... lost its savor..... And then he tells us that he.....underwent *what he describes as a kind of conversion* by reading the poetry of Wordsworth, that poet of immortality." The implications of the above passage are: (1) that Mill felt the necessity of a belief in a future life, (2) that without such a belief this life lost its "savor," and (3) that Mill was "converted" by reading Wordsworth on Immortality. Now, (1) Mill did not say that *so little, indeed, would be realised* if he obtained all the reforms he was striving for. He said that, if there was nothing to strive after, life would be colorless; and he himself describes this feeling as akin to the fear that the sun would be burnt out, and attributes it to his low state of health; (2) Mill nowhere uses the term "conversion." This phrase is placed in his mouth for obvious reasons. He did say that he derived benefit from Wordsworth's pictures of rural scenery, but he describes the *Intimation of Immortality* as "bad philosophy." When two such phrases are placed in Mill's mouth by Mr. Horton, there is only one word accurately describing such statements, and I used it.

The statement made by Farrar is that "Noble Roman matrons counted the years, not by the consuls, but by their discarded, or discarding, husbands" (*Early Days of Christianity*, ed. 1894; p. 26). Authorities cited are Seneca, De Benef, III., 16; Tertullian, Apology, 6; Tacitus, Germ., 19; Suetonius, Calig., 34. Of these Seneca does make the statement, although it is spoiled by being separated from the context. Tertullian is writing a tirade against extravagant dress, and says no such thing. Suetonius makes no such statement at all. And Tacitus does not, in the chapter cited, even mention Roman women directly or indirectly, nor does he make any such statement in the whole of his treatise. I might cite other examples of Farrar's mental obliquity; but, as I intend devoting a special article to him one day, I let the matter rest here. A full notice of Mr. Horton's sermon will be found in the *Freethinker* for December 17, 1899. C. COHEN.

No Parsons in Heaven.

The chaplain of one of the lunatic asylums tells the following:—A woman (a patient of the asylum) is very keen on making him ask her conundrums. One day the chaplain asked her: "Why are there no marriages in heaven?" She could not answer then, so he told her that it was "because there are so few women there." Two days later a woman from the patients' ward gave him the following letter: "Rev. Sir,—The answer you gave me on Saturday was not the correct one. The reason why there are no marriages in heaven is because there are no parsons to perform them."

Gin and Religion.

THOUGH we may run the risk of shocking some of our Exeter Hall subscribers, we make bold to assert that a lot of this trouble which is at present endangering the future of the corrupt old Chinese Empire is directly traceable to the mischievous meddling of missionaries sent out from this country by foolish old spinsters whose sovereigns might far better be spent on the poor starving little brats of our countless and indescribable London slums. It is a bit cheeky, to say the least of it, to try and stuff our own pet, particular religion down the throats of all the rest of mankind not exactly of our way of thinking; but A. SLOPER is not going to moralise, but to tell a little story.

Out in a far North China Station a batch of these unordained parsons were converting the poor Heathen Chinee by getting him to accept, as it were, Christianity in one hand and a pair of winter scarlet wool blankets in the other. Now, the Heathen Chinee of North China, or this particular part of it, has no immediate need of scarlet wool blankets—*as* blankets—because he always carries enough dirt on him to keep him warm. But he is glad to get them all the same. He is glad to get them because there are plenty of European traders knocking about ready to do a little business swop at the rate of one bottle of good old London gin for two pairs of the wool blankets aforesaid, so that any two of the Celestials who care to take their gifts together to the unsentimental storekeeper can be sure of getting "blind" to their hearts' content that night, out of the same bottle.

It was a long time before the good missionaries "tumbled" to what was really up; but, of course, it came out eventually. They appealed to the British Consul to step in and stop it, but the British Consul wasn't quite such a fool as to interfere in such a matter. They tried as well as they knew how to suppress the illicit trading themselves, but the half-converted Heathen Chinee is a very tricky customer to handle, and ignominious failure resulted all along the line. All they could do was to exhort the almond-eyed converts to take more care in the future of the precious red blankets, which so frequently got "lost"; but even this scarcely diminished the traffic.

It happened that there strolled into the Mission Hall one evening a certain Wun Lung, who had already "lost" four sets of the precious blankets. He came to tell the old, old lie of being robbed again, and he spoke of how cold it was of nights. Of course the missionaries knew that he was lying like truth all the time, but they didn't quite know how to act in this emergency. They consulted together, long and earnestly, and finally they concluded not to give him any more blankets, for a week or two at any rate. With a very serious countenance the head missionary conveyed the verdict to Wun Lung, and that pesky child of sin was a bit flabbergasted.

"Whattee, whattee—no more blanketee?" he cried.

"Not at present," replied the missionary, still a little afraid of losing a convert.

"Velly well then——," began the Chinee, deliberately.

"Very well what?" interrupted the missionary.

"You no givee (blanky) blanketee, I no play bleing (blanky) Clistian. Wichee glood day!"

But they called him back and set him up with blankets again!

—*Sloper's Half Holiday.*

Grace before Meat.

THE scene of the following tale of family worship is laid in Port Jervis, New York, and the story is told in the *New York World* of June 29: "Henry Gotte, a farmer, wished to pray, and, being balked, stabbed his wife and daughter because they objected to his saying grace before meat. He is in the local jail. Gotte, wife, and daughter seated themselves at the dinner-table on Tuesday. 'We will now return thanks for all the good things we are about to receive,' said Gotte, devoutly. 'Oh, what's the use of praying?' interrupted Miss Gotte, who is seventeen years old. 'You'll be only quarrelling and fighting and cursing afterwards.' Her prayerful father threw a plate at her. 'I say we will pray,' he insisted. 'You're a thankless——.' 'The child is right,' said Mrs. Gotte, jumping up and striking her husband on the nose. 'We want peace and quiet here, not prayers.' Gotte stabbed his wife in the arm with the carving-fork. 'We'll pray,' he yelled, 'or there'll be——.' 'Let mother alone!' screamed the daughter, springing at her father. Gotte the devout stabbed his daughter with the fork, too. Mother and daughter ran shrieking to a neighbor's house. Gotte pursued, crying at every jump: 'You won't pray, eh? Just let me catch you!' The neighbor sheltered Mrs. and Miss Gotte, who on Thursday went to the local justice and swore out a warrant for the truly good Gotte's arrest."

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

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Correspondence.

THE FALL OF MAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I thank you much for kindly inserting my letter, and still more by implying in your first article that you will permit its defence. You truly represent my views by stating I hold "Adam and Eve were real personages, and the Garden of Eden a definite portion of the earth's surface." I have neither fear nor scruple in proclaiming my unshaken belief is that Scripture account of the Temptation relates an actual historical fact which took place about eight thousand years ago. Permit me now to discuss your replies. To save space I put my remarks under three heads :—

(1) You say, with respect to Satan's employment of a snake : "Serpents are not endowed with a talking apparatus, and all the devils in hell could not make them use organs which they do not possess." My answer is, I do not believe the serpent spoke at all. I believe Satan alone spoke, but that to disguise himself he made it appear the serpent spoke, and that Scripture relates what appeared to take place. Subsequent disclosures (as I have said) show the Devil was really the speaker.

(2) By way of showing Adam and Eve were legendary figures, you write : "Thousands of years before they were created, according to Bible chronology, countries like Egypt were inhabited by millions of civilised men and women." Now this assertion I flatly deny, on the authority of such books as Dr. Southall's *Epoch of the Mammoth* and *Recent Origin of Man*, published by Trübner and Co., Ludgate Hill. I add that if any author has even attempted to refute Dr. Southall, I am unaware of the fact. I give some quotations from the first chapter of *Epoch of the Mammoth* to illustrate argumentation of the work. Southall writes : "The primitive condition of mankind was one of civilisation. The first glimpse we catch of the race in Egypt and Babylonia presents it as engaged in erecting pyramids," etc., etc., etc. Further on he writes : "All the evidences for the antiquity of man are found in Europe or in the river-valleys of India, but none such in Egypt, nor in middle or western Asia, which has been generally accepted as the primeval centre of the families of man." He then explains that ancient vestiges of man found in Europe are those of primitive tribes wandering off from the seats of civilisation (pp. 3 and 6). The last clause of Chapter I. runs thus : "If, again, it be true that man did appear in a civilised condition abruptly on the scene some six thousand or ten thousand years ago, and there are no traces of such a being prior to this, then, so far as man is concerned, the theory of Mr. Darwin, and all theories of evolution as applied to man, are negatived." These statements meet your assertion that we are sprung "from savage progenitors." Pardon me if I add geography further traverses your idea. Savages have been found hundreds of years ago in countries where Europeans cannot flourish, and they remain the same savages still, unable to take one step to elevate themselves.

(3) You say : "After asserting the 'innocence' of Adam and Eve, and their being without any 'evil inclinations,' Mr. Alcock states that their sin was 'deliberate.' We beg him to reconcile these apparent contradictions." I "reconcile" by reminding you that the evil inclinations from which I said they were free were any desires to break the moral law, as illustrated in that comprehensive summary known as the Ten Commandments. The sin of which they were guilty was an attempt to seek forbidden knowledge, which, as they hoped, would render them independent of God. That a possibility of going wrong may exist in perfect men and women is plain, because to human existence certain appetites are indispensable which, unless held under control, will lead to sin. Thus, we cannot get on without hunger and thirst ; yet, if these appetites be not restrained, they lead to gluttony and drunkenness. So likewise we cannot make mental progress, unless we have a desire for information ; but this, unless restrained by conscience and duty, may lead to deliberate sin, as it did Adam and Eve. It is well for us to be ignorant of certain information, whereby wicked men carry on their evil designs. Would you or I be profited by learning how to coin base money ? I make this letter as short as I can.

HENRY J. ALCOCK, M.A.

195, Portsdown Road, W., July 19, 1900.

[We think a very brief reply is all that Mr. Alcock's second letter demands. What he *believes* is quite unimportant. All we care about is what he *knows*—that is, the facts. He believes that Adam and Eve actually lived 8,000 years ago, though the Bible chronology only allows about 6,000 years. He believes that the serpent did not talk, but the Bible says it did. He believes that Satan used the serpent, but the Bible says nothing whatever about Satan in this story. Mr. Alcock must try to pardon us for saying that his remarks on Darwinism and the antiquity of the human race are childish. Not knowing the facts, he is misled by the first orthodox "authority" he meets. Dr. Southall is a nobody in this connection. For the rest, we have simply to say that Mr. Alcock does *not* explain how two beings without any "evil inclinations" could go morally wrong. His statement that *perfect* men and women are capable of going wrong is to us sheer nonsense. Let him extend the same idea to God, who is declared to be perfect, and God could go wrong too.—ED.]

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Having been away from home, I was precluded from following the interesting controversy on the use of the word "religion," for the starting of which I think I was responsible. As to that controversy in its details between "Chilperic" and Mr. Ball, I do not desire to intervene ; but there are two main points that seem to me important, and which require to be brought out.

Neither Mr. Gould nor Mr. Ball has answered the question I asked in the original article as to how they would check anyone who proposed to deal with other words as they deal with the word "religion." There is not an argument which Mr. Gould or Mr. Ball advances for the secular appropriation of "religion" which would not equally apply to the annexation, say, of the word "Christian." That word certainly is often recklessly used to indicate what is considered moral and high-minded conduct, the assumption, of course, being that such conduct implies a belief in Christianity. And the word, I presume, also fulfils Mr. Gould's condition of having "embodied the sincerest ideals of [our] fathers," and for that matter, doubtless, of embodying the sincere ideals of some people still. Well, why not annex it ? For aught I know, Mr. Gould may be prepared to do so. But by that time we would be back at Christian Atheism and phrases like "the good Atheist is the true Christian," which even to-day do pass current with muddle-headed and loose-thinking people. But I fancy not many Rationalists would be prepared to go that length in the annexation policy.

The second point is Mr. Ball's argument, in the postscript to his letter of May 20, as to the common usage of the word "religion." He says my argument, that nine out of ten attach a theological significance to the term, is inconclusive because certain people pretend that Atheism connotes immorality. But surely Mr. Ball perceives the difference in the two cases. Some uneducated, and even some supposedly educated, persons may argue that Atheism involves immorality, but that is an inference—a matter of controversy. No educated person and no dictionary pretends that *directly* Atheism carries that meaning. But the question raised on the word "religion" is one of etymology. Most educated persons and most dictionaries *do* define religion as involving theological belief, though of course we are all aware that some Positivists and some Ethicists use the word without intending such significance. Mr. Ball's argument, therefore, either means that, because some people infer immorality from the profession of Atheism, we can use words indiscriminately, or it is meaningless.

Verbal scrupulousness is surely one of the essentials of intellectual progress. And that Mr. Ball should describe as "exclusively critical or fault-noticing" those who are anxious to promote this scrupulousness, in contradistinction to the "more constructive" people, who add to the existing confusion by using words out of their common accepted meaning, is to me an example of the carelessness with which these words "destructive" and "constructive" are themselves frequently used. Indeed, that Mr. Ball should disparage criticism is itself extraordinary. What other part than that of critic did he play in the present dispute ? He entered it—perfectly legitimately—to criticise "Chilperic"; and the spectacle of a critic condemning criticism—though not uncommon in the world of thought—is always somewhat humorous.

As I endeavored to point out originally, all intellectual advance implies accurate thinking, and is, therefore, comparatively slow. An apparent rapid advance may be made by borrowing words and labels from the reigning creed, by taking old formulas and striving to make them live again, by adopting obsolete ceremonies and endeavoring to give them new significance. But all that work could be much better applied, for some of it helps to keep in countenance the old superstition by making its old formulas seem respectable. If a Rationalist, say, calls himself a Christian, he is really, in part, helping to buttress Christianity ; and, whether or not he thinks it useful to waste his time explaining that he means the word to be taken in an extraordinary sense, his conduct will be turned to the account of orthodox Christianity, and his example thrown at the heads of less convention-bound men than he. How often do we not hear from the common pulpit such phrases in reference to a semi-Rationalist as : "He never ceased to reverentially call himself a Christian."

No ; progress comes by thinking, and one of the ways of making men think is by challenging their accepted formulas and breaking with their shibboleths. For progress can only be measured in intellectual stimulus. FREDERICK RYAN.

Mrs. Sparks—"Can't you get the stove-pipe together, John ?" Rev. Mr. Sparks—"No, I cannot, Mary ; and if it wasn't that I'm a minister of the gospel, I'd kick the whole darn business to pieces."—*Judge*.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

WEST LONDON BRANCH ("Victory," Newnham-street, Queen's-street, Edgware-road): July 31, at 9, Business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7, Freethought Demonstration.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, E. White.

KILBURN (Glengall-road): 7.30, F. Schaller.

HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.30, E. White.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, C. Cohen.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, A lecture; 6.30, A lecture.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, C. Cohen.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, A lecture.

FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, W. Heaford.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A. B. Moss: "Scripture and Science"; 7.15, R. P. Edwards. August 1, at 8.15, W. J. Ramsey.

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (in the Bull Ring): 11, F. Hanks: "An Hour in Hell." Mr. Percy Ward will also lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8—weather permitting.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Open air.—Ducie-street, Piccadilly, near London-road Station: 3, H. Percy Ward: "The Gospel of Secularism"; Stevenson-square, 7, "Does God Answer Prayer?"

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (1 Grainger-street): 3, Members' Meeting

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Members and friends meet at 2.45 at corner of Arundel and Norfolk-streets to go, at 3 prompt, by conveyances, to Mr. Ewing's Farm, Wharncliffe Side.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): Annual Picnic at Holywell Dene. Brakes leave Jarrow Ferry (North side), 1; Tyne Dock (fountain), 12.45; Shields Ferry, 1.15; North Shields, 1.30.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—29, m., Station-road, Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye; e., West Ham Demonstration.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—July 29, m., Mile End; e., Stratford. August 26, m., Mile End.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—July 29, Manchester. August 5, Birmingham; 12, Failsworth; 19, Northampton; 26, Birmingham.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—August 5, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 12, m., Hyde Park; a., Victoria Park; e., Kilburn. 19, m., Battersea; e., Hammersmith. 26, a. and e., Brockwell Park. September 2, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 9, Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

Ingersoll's Last Lecture.

"WHAT IS RELIGION?"

An Address delivered before the American Free Religious Association, at Boston, June 2, 1899.

Freethinkers should keep a copy of this Lecture always by them. It was Ingersoll's last utterance on the subject of religion. It shows him to have been a "rank Atheist" to the very end. Moreover, it is a summary of his life's teaching, and embalms his ripest thought.

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Secularism and Problems of the Day	0	2
Theological Presumption	0	2
Reply to Father Lambert	0	6
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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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The Holy Kaiser.

Emperor William is largely responsible for the present trouble in China; first, by his monstrous exactions as reparation for the murder of two German missionaries; secondly, by his allowing, and even sending, German officers to drill the Chinese army. Those exactions have naturally inflamed the resentment of the Chinese against the "foreign devils," and persuaded them—especially in conjunction with the still greater encroachments of Russia—that nothing but immediate and resolute action would save them from the loss of all their valuable seaports, and perhaps the complete partition of their eastern territory amongst the Christian Powers. It was therefore a tragi-farcical sight to behold this same Emperor William crying "Vengeance! Vengeance!" on receiving the news that his Ambassador to China had been murdered by the fanatical Boxers or by the riotous mob of Peking. Being a devout Christian, and a notable reader of the Bible, he is doubtless aware of the text, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." But even a divine text is a very feeble obstacle to the hot passions and imperious temper of the War Lord of Germany. His legions have nothing to do at home except to keep themselves in constant readiness for fighting. They never see blood drawn or guns fired in anger. And as this is desperately tame work, it is not astonishing that the master of such an army should yearn to have at least a contingent of them employed in active service against the Heathen Chinee; who, if he beat and kill this contingent, is too far off to become a serious danger to Germany.

Considering the moral pretensions and pharisaic airs of the bulk of Christians, it would be laughable, if it were not so disgusting, to observe how readily they clamor for vengeance. The passion to which they yield is one of the most malignant and anti-social. It is characteristic of barbaric society, and is a direct inheritance from savagery. From its very nature it is peculiarly destructive, because it moves forward in an endless progression of mischief, unless it is arrested by reason, humanity, or lassitude. One act of violence leads to another, and that to another, and so on as far as the mind is able to reach. A Chinaman kills a German, and the Germans set it right by killing several Chinamen; then the Chinamen redress the balance by killing another German; and then the Germans prepare to make matters even by killing some more Chinamen. Where on earth is this process to stop? Unless common sense intervene the feud must last until the end of time. Bacon did indeed call revenge "a kind of wild justice," but he was philosopher enough to see that it was more likely to be wild than just; and he remarked that the "more man's nature runs to" it, the "more ought law to weed it out." Christianity professes to be above law, and above philosophy; yet, in spite of all its transcendent and impossible maxims—or perhaps *because* of them—it never produces a state of moral justice in the minds of its devotees. Where law and philosophy cease to operate, or operate only with slight force, as in the relations between distant countries, unconnected by common interests, it is found that Christianity leaves its devotees at the mercy of the most sinister emotions. This is not merely true at present; it has been one of the permanent features of Christian history. The various countries of Christendom have very rarely displayed any sense of honor in their dealings with each other. Where the *social* bond was absent, the *religious* bond was of no avail. Even when Christendom was united in crusades against the Mohammedans, its constituent nations and governments displayed the utmost perfidy and villainy amongst themselves.

We are not surprised, therefore, at Emperor William's calling for vengeance. He is a pious Christian, and naturally talks that way. Nor are we astonished at the sentiments he expressed on dispatching four thousand German troops from Bremerhaven to China. "On coming into contact with the enemy," he said, "know this: Quarter will not be given, prisoners will not be taken. Use your arms so that for a thousand years to come no Chinese will dare to look askance at any German." Such is Christian morality in the mouth of an imperial pietist. It smacks of the Old Testament command to slay all and leave alive nothing that breathed. Emperor William assumes that, because the Chinese give no quarter, which is not strictly true, the Allies are bound to follow their example. But this is not necessary. No doubt the Dervishes in the Soudan would have spared not a single soldier of our army if they had defeated Lord Kitchener at Omdurman. This fact did not, however, oblige us to kill all the Khalifa's troops. We slaughtered enough of them, it is true, but that was done in actual fighting. We did not take the life, or shed the blood, of a single prisoner. It is to be hoped, then, that Emperor William will yet see the detestable folly of his advice to his soldiers at Bremerhaven. Perhaps, too, he will live to be ashamed of saying that the punishment of the Chinese must be such that they will remember it for a thousand years.

It seems to us a great piece of humbug for Emperor William to pretend that his soldiers have gone to China to "open the way to civilisation." They have really gone to open the way for the European Powers into the heart of the Celestial Empire. The real motive in operation is not morality, but cupidity. The massacre of the Ambassadors and the other Europeans at Peking is a very shocking tragedy, but the Powers are simply making it a pretext for the execution of their designs upon China. Had they merely desired to save the lives of their subjects, they would have hastened on to Peking. That is what Admiral Seymour gallantly tried to do with an absurdly inadequate force. But he was only a sailor, with no ulterior ends in view. He was a rescuer, not a politician. No doubt he was thinking chiefly of the women and children. His failure was not his fault. The only wonder is that he brought his little force back alive. Had the same spirit prevailed in other breasts, the allied armies might have broken through all obstacles before this. What paralyses them is their suspicion of each other, and their recognition of the terrible problem which will confront them at the end of their punitive expedition. What is to be done then? Will the European Powers agree upon a common policy? Or will they fall out and fight each other? Nobody knows, and only a very confident man could hold a definite conviction.

After that ridiculous and wicked language, Emperor William seems to have felt the spirit of the Lord strong upon him. He was wound up to the religious concert pitch. Accordingly he observed that "every civilisation that was not founded on Christianity was sure to be brought to naught." What an upstart utterance! Why, the civilisation of China is hoary with antiquity as compared with the civilisation of any Christian country. The civilisation of Germany is relatively a thing of yesterday. How long it will last is a question in prophecy, which no sane man will attempt to determine. But this at least is obvious to the student of

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history, that the great civilisations of ancient Egypt, India, Assyria, Greece, and Rome enjoyed a longer life than has yet been reached by the civilisation of modern Europe; and that the religions they happened to profess had little, if anything, to do with their longevity. All of them arose, attained to their zenith, and descended to their nadir, under the sway of military and economical causes. The gods triumphed with their worshippers, and with them fell into disgrace or oblivion.

The final words of Emperor William's address sounded more like an episcopal benediction than a Kaiser's farewell. "The blessing of the Lord be with you. The prayers of the whole people accompany you in all your ways. May the blessing of God rest on your banners, and may he vouchsafe to you to find a path for Christianity in that far-off country." These are some of his pious ejaculations. Probably the blessing of God will rest on their banners, for Providence is always on the side of the big battalions, and a combination of all the Europeans Powers, together with the United States and Japan, should be able to defeat the Chinese army and the Chinese rabble. But it is doubtful if they will open a way for Christianity. People are not usually in love with the religion of their oppressors and despoilers. And if the missionaries cannot convert China by themselves, they will hardly do it with the aid of rifles and bayonets. On the whole, we incline to think that Emperor William's religion is more skin-deep than perhaps he himself imagines. It is quite possible that he regards himself as a soldier of the Cross, but it is pretty clear to others that he is looking out for political and material advantages at the expense of the Heathen. It is also pretty clear that his morality is hardly up to the level of that of Confucius, the great Secularist, who taught the Chinese, more than two thousand years ago, the essential and eternal principles of private virtue and national greatness.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Bible Dangerous Reading.

THE advice given in the New Testament to "search the Scriptures" might be made useful if properly carried out. It would then certainly prove to the impartial mind a very entertaining occupation. The study of the contents of the Bible should be approached free from all theological bias, and also without any desire to arrive at conclusions as to the merits and demerits of its teachings, except those which are fair and just. Not long since a pious manifesto was issued, signed by about forty deans, canons, rectors, and other clergymen of the Church of England, in which the signatories alleged that human reason is incompetent "to deliver judgment on the authority of the Holy Bible." Here we have one of the causes of that credulous belief in the Bible which so extensively prevails amongst a certain section of the community. But I ask, if reason is not the tribunal of appeal in reference to the claims urged on behalf of the Bible, what is? Even some of the more intelligent authorities in the Church admit that reason should predominate in our examination of the book. For instance, Bishop Butler, in his *Analogy of Religion*, remarks: "Reason is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself." Chillingworth says: "It is by reason alone that we can distinguish truth from falsehood." Dean Prideaux admits that the New Testament should be tried by reason, while Bishop Marsh states that "the Bible must be examined by the same laws of criticism which are applied to other writings of antiquity."

This is the position taken by Freethinkers, for with Bible idolatry we have no sympathy. The days of Bible rule are almost gone. Such domination was possible only when people were either unable or unwilling to think for themselves. Slavish submission to any book cannot co-exist with intellectual earnestness and mental activity. Suppose such a work as the Bible suited our forefathers centuries ago, it is now clear that it will not satisfy the needs and aspirations of modern times. It has played its part in the evolution of theology. With the past we have done except to profit by the lessons it has bequeathed to the present generation, and one of those lessons certainly is, that we should not allow the progress that is now apparent in every sphere of life to be hampered and marred by the many absurd and questionable teachings of the Old Testament, or by the fanciful and impracticable injunctions of the New.

Orthodox believers content themselves with dwelling on the myths of the past and the imaginations of the future, leaving the ever-present comparatively unheeded. We, as Secularists, prefer the more useful course of availing ourselves of the value of *what is* allied with the serviceable of *what was*, and thus secure a better *what may be*. The Bible that would be acceptable to-day should be the brain-power preserved in ink of the great and noble of every age and of every country; a work clouded by no assumed divinity, mutilated by no ecclesiastical authority, and deteriorated by no theological contamination. The Secularist's Bible must be born of human thought, interpreted by cultivated reason, and justified by its adaptability to the requirements of the time in which we live. Being free from the orthodox limit of finality, its value will be enhanced by an ever-increasing knowledge, its usefulness will be augmented by the growth of experience, and its authority will be that it has truth for its credentials and utility for its recommendation.

With a view of affording the general public an opportunity for having the most objectionable portions of the Bible at their command, the Freethought Publishing Company has just issued a new and carefully-revised edition of *The Bible Handbook*, which contains one hundred and sixty-two pages of texts taken verbatim from the Bible, showing its contradictions, its absurdities, its atrocities, its unfulfilled prophecies, its immoralities, indecencies, and obscenities. In his preface to the *Handbook*, Mr. G. W. Foote states the purpose of its publication thus:—

> "The object of this compilation is certainly not orthodox, and the general body of Christians will doubtless object to its method. They will probably deny the fairness of pulling the Bible to pieces in this fashion. But the apologists of the Christian Scriptures are constantly occupied in belauding them, and there is no necessity to duplicate their performance; on the contrary, there is room for something of an opposite description, and this is what is here produced. Not the best, but the worst things in the Bible are selected.....Unquestionably it would be grossly unfair to disembowel an ordinary book in this way. One would not so treat Shakespeare, or any other great classic, either of modern times or of antiquity. But the Bible is not an ordinary book. It is stamped as God's Word by Act of Parliament; it is forced into the hands of children in our private and public schools; it is used as a kind of fetish for swearing upon in our Courts of Law and our Houses of Legislation. People have been robbed of their children in its name, or excluded from public positions to which they were elected by their fellow citizens. Men are still liable, at law, to imprisonment for bringing it into 'disbelief and contempt.' Surely, then, a book which makes, or has made for it, such extraordinary pretensions should be subjected to extraordinary tests. We may admit a mirror to be a good one, although we observe some blemishes; but we are entitled to point out its flaws when it is declared to be perfect."

This rather lengthy excerpt is given because, in my opinion, it furnishes ample justification for the republication of the *Handbook*. Having read every line of the work, I have no hesitation in saying that its contents should prove invaluable to those who desire to possess a fair knowledge of the Bible; and it should be of special service to Freethinkers, whose duty it is to combat the false and extravagant notions entertained by some professed Christians in reference to "God's Word."

A careful study of the *Handbook* will bring to view, in a clear and concise form, the following facts: That the Bible is not the only alleged sacred book; that portions of its contents are so immoral and obscene that they should not be in general and indiscriminate circulation; that many of its statements are so thoroughly absurd that they cannot be of any practical service to human progress; that the character it gives of its God is brutal in the extreme; that its teachings in reference to woman are cruel, despotic, indecent, and degrading; that most of its ethical inculcations are inferior to those taught by the ancient philosophers; that it is by no means the oldest book; that its record of events is so vague and contradictory that it is unworthy of credence; that its biographies are samples of

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folly, deceit, and licentiousness ; that many of its teachings are inhuman and opposed to the promotion of the happiness of mankind ; and that it affords no adequate guide for human conduct. Upon all these points passages are given in the *Handbook*, with chapter and verse, both from the Old and New Testaments. The *Bible Handbook* should be in the library of every "seeker for truth." My advice to all readers of these lines is to secure the book at once and digest its contents, which will show that Bible reading is dangerous to the tastes and morals not only of the rising generation, but of all sections of the community. It will also demonstrate beyond a doubt that a book the history of which is doubtful, the nature mystical, the teachings contradictory and, in many instances, positively injurious, can never harmonise with the genius of material progress and intellectual development. Far be it from me to allege that the Bible has not a legitimate place in modern literature. Undoubtedly it has one : it reveals the weaknesses, the imperfections, and the errors which darkened the past by impeding personal improvement and by retarding general advancement. Moreover, it serves as a beacon warning us of the dangerous paths which were once regarded as being safe to tread. It is a history of superstition that for ages robbed life of its real value and beauty, and dimmed the mental glory of the human race. When we reflect upon the extraordinary hold this book once had upon its devotees, and contrast that power with its present non-influence upon the conduct of men, what a striking indication we have of the decadence of theological restriction, and of the marvellous expansion of intellectual freedom. The Bible should be estimated by its contents, and not by its supposed authority. To allow any book to be our master instead of our servant is to prostrate reason at the shrine of a humiliating idolatry.

CHARLES WATTS.

More About Missions.

JOHN BULL is beginning to feel more than a little disturbed about his once-boasted foreign missions. He used to think that one of the great achievements the Almighty depended upon him to bring about was the Christianising of the globe. Now he is not at all certain that the globe—or, at any rate, immense portions of it—are in any immediate need of his evangelising services.

"Go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" now strikes him as a thing easier said than done. He is rather glad that recent warnings of one of his high public officials have afforded him an excuse for shirking the Divinely-appointed task. He would—at any rate, for a little time to come—prefer to leave the Christianising to foreigners. Meanwhile, he is by no means sure that he has not been a trifle over-zealous in the past. The May meetings at Exeter Hall next year will probably have to lament a considerable falling off in funds for converting the heathen. Laments of that kind are common enough, but there is likely to be a real deficit exhibited next May and June.

We infer much of this from the many comments and expostulations which have recently appeared in the press. In quite unexpected quarters observations have been published which would have been deemed by their readers rank heresy or ungodly indifference a few months ago, but which now seem to have met with more or less approval.

The unhappy events in China have revived and reinforced a strong feeling of objection to Christian missionary methods. And that quite apart from any question as to the possibility that missionaries—Roman Catholic or Protestant—had contributed to an outbreak in this particular instance. The discussion opened has been on general grounds, affecting not China simply, but missions to India, Japan, and elsewhere. From diplomatic considerations it has drifted to the question whether missions are any use at all, even from a Christian proselytising point of view, except in regard to absolute savages who may be supposed to be contented with anything Christian if accompanied with presents of beads, feathers, and cheap Houndsditch togs.

The Bishop of London, as we know, disclaims, in regard to recent events, any responsibility on the part of Anglican missionaries. He thinks it unfortunate that all missionaries are classed together. He believes that "our" missionaries were careful not to seem to interfere in the internal affairs of the country, but he adds : "*I am not sure that the same could be said of all.* Lord Salisbury indicated that missionary work should be carried on at the risk of those engaged in it, without involving action on the part of their Governments. With this I quite agree. The political difficulty arises when popular clamor demands that missionaries should be avenged. I do not think that this is a Christian way of regarding the matter." This is sensible enough, for though we have missions, almost numberless in our own country—even Freethought missions—there is the fact that we are on our own ground ; whereas abroad we are visitors or guests, and are there only on sufferance.

In the July issue of the *North American Review* appears an interesting article by Mr. Poultney Bigelow on "Missions and Missionaries in China." According to his information, the prospects of real missionary success with the Chinese have always been infinitesimal. The testimony of Father Palladius, a late Russian missionary, confirms this. He says: "I have been here (China) forty years, and perhaps I have converted one Chinaman. When missionaries tell you that they have done more than that, do not believe them." This is a fine record, indeed ; after forty years' residence the missionary can point to one Chinaman converted, and does not seem to be quite sure about him, for he simply says he *believes* this Mongolian unit to be converted. If this is really the average achievement of other missionaries in China, where, indeed, is the use of spending so much money and trouble on missions, with the possibility of being charged, rightly or wrongly, with causing internal dissensions in the country and creating European complications and terrible alarm ?

Five weeks ago the *Freethinker* was asked pointedly by the *Church Gazette* whether it did not think that the Church Missionary Society was engaged in a good and useful work. A reply was made to that inquiry in these columns, which, needless to say, was not favorable to the claims of the Society. At that time our contemporary appeared to think it an illiberal notion, not to say an evidence of bad taste, to dispute the claims of the Church Missionary Society. Now it publishes other editorial notes which have reference to Church missionary enterprise, and which do not quite breathe the same spirit of admiration. To commence with, there is the statement that this is a "time when the utility of missions to countries like India and China is being discussed," and therefore it becomes pertinent to ascertain the spirit in which these are carried on. "Charges of 'stupidity,' on the one hand, have been made against missionaries—with what truth we cannot say," remarks, with a fine indifference, this former defender of the Church Missionary Society—"and, on the other hand, of arrogant and overbearing conduct. These charges, however, are denied."

Then adds the journal referred to : "There remains a charge which will brook no denial, because it has for its authority the *Indian Churchman's Kalendar* for the current year, and refers to the quality of the teaching imparted. We hardly suppose, however, that any missions of the C. M. S. are responsible for the following methods of presenting Jesus to the Hindoo." But why not responsible ? If the Church Missionary Society, with its yearly income of over £400,000, exhibits no interest in the *Indian Churchman's Kalendar*, what on earth is it doing ? Then the *C. G.* goes on to cite some absurd instructions which are there authoritatively given for reaching the Brahmin or Mohammedan mind. It adds :—

> "Now, to a certain class of Anglican mind all this may be very interesting ; but to the Oriental we doubt whether it is a fair presentation of Christianity. He will see in it nothing but a form of heathenism other than those he knows of ; and as such he will not see the advantage of forsaking what is, to him, more congenial.
>
> "We cannot conceive wherefore the Jews, who live peaceably among us, cannot be let alone in the enjoyment of a faith which seems to suit them, and to which they are devotedly attached."

This is rather an improvement on the suggestion that

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the *Universe* was "narrow and uncharitable" in attacking the Church Missionary Society. But, then, of course, events have changed, and the *Church Gazette*, after all, sails as near the wind as possible, and is perhaps to be applauded rather than reproached for going as far as it does. There always remains the fact that it is an interesting paper. In its latest issue it inserts a second letter on missions from a well-informed writer who has had considerable experience in India, and who states what is common knowledge—namely, that "It is only, as a rule, the scum of the Hindoos who become Christians." He notes, what is also common knowledge, that any "purely educational" effort in regard to the natives is "only given with an ulterior motive"—namely, to "attract the natives to their teaching, and thus to make them Christians."

> "The missionaries may be able men, but their intellects are not strong enough to combat the subtle arguments of the Hindoo. I have heard Swâmi Vivakunanda arguing with Christians, and it was extremely painful to me to see the way in which the latter were worsted at every point. In order to convert India, the very best men we can send would be needed, and not merely men of average ability. Then the manner in which we conduct our missions is open to much criticism. Our men would gain always a respectful hearing were they to become 'holy men' in the sense which the natives understand by the term. I expressed myself badly when I said the missionaries were arrogant in their behavior. Many of them are as meek and mild as their hearers. I should rather have said that their method is aggressive. They go in European dress entirely; they try to force a Western civilisation on an Oriental people; and they endeavor to crush the national spirit out of the people. Do the missionaries agitate to have the natives' grievances redressed? Do they enter at all into the life of the native? No; they are content to act as outsiders—as a superior people, in fact. I shall refrain from speaking of the things they preach—that were too painful."

The Evangelical *Christian World*, in an editorial note on another subject, casually alludes to "off-hand critics of missionaries"; but that journal is probably as well aware as most of its readers that the criticism, so far from being "off-hand," is deliberate and direct, and is backed by evidence which is indisputable.

Francis Neale.

The Value of Christian Endeavor.

My article on "Christian Endeavor" in the *Freethinker* for July 22 has brought me quite a number of communications—some stupid, some stupid and abusive, and one or two argumentative. Those coming under the two first headings may charitably be consigned to oblivion. It is nothing fresh to learn that we of the Secular party are engaged in lowering men to the level of beasts (the drop would not be severe in all cases), or that our principles, if persisted in, would wreck society. All these charges are wearisomely familiar, the only remarkable thing about them being the stupidity of Christians in imagining that they can have any possible influence upon us.

There is a point in one of the letters I have received that may be noticed in passing. A correspondent, evidently laboring under the delusion that, because I bear a Jewish name, I must be a foreigner, reads me a long lecture on the "favors" the Jews have received in this Christian country, with the obvious implication that, in face of this, I must be terribly ungrateful to take part in an anti-Christian propaganda. Now, I do not admit for a moment that the better position of Jews in this country is due to Christianity. On the contrary, it is due to our being rather less Christian here than elsewhere that Jew-baiting is non-existent. So long as Christianity was all-powerful, the position of Jews in England was pretty much as it was elsewhere. The liberty they enjoyed under the Romans quickly disappeared under Christian rule. Canute the Great banished them altogether. William I. took them again into favor, but every Jew was legally the property of the Crown. The period of the Crusades witnessed their wholesale murder, and the tender mercies of the Christians were exemplified by the self-immolation of five hundred Jews and Jewesses at York, who preferred suicide to falling alive into their hands. Under Edward I. they were once more banished the kingdom, and were only readmitted under Cromwell. And when, finally, we remember that not until 1846 were English Jews placed upon a legal equality with English Gentiles, one wonders what Christianity has had to do with their present position. Of course, if it is a "favor" not to murder, rob, or outrage men and women because they happen to be Jews or Jewesses, then they have much to be grateful for. Perhaps my correspondent will explain, if it is Christianity that places Jew and Gentile on an equality in England, what it is that disfranchises and ill-treats the Jew elsewhere.

To return to the Society of Christian Endeavor. Several of my correspondents fall foul of me for "sneering" at people who are as earnest and as honest in their belief as I am in mine. But I did not "sneer" at either their earnestness or their honesty. I am willing to grant both, but still insist that honesty is no guarantee of accuracy, nor earnestness of useful work. A very large part of the world's troubles springs from faults of the intellect rather than from brutality of feeling. The softness of the human head is responsible for as much evil and suffering as the hardness of the human heart. The evils of honest zeal divorced from a corresponding intellectual development are writ large over the whole of human history. It is mainly responsible for all the evil that religion has caused. It led people to regard the extirpation of heresy as a service to God; it kept the witch-finder busy and the inquisitor fully employed. It has blasted the lives of thousands of men and women by the institution of celibacy. It fostered hatred and persecution, and bred immorality and bigotry. Honest conviction, steadfast endeavor to carry that conviction into practice, is good; but, divorced from adequate knowledge, it may prove far more dangerous than supine indifference or absolute dishonesty. It is from this standpoint that I complain of such movements as the Society of Christian Endeavor, not from that of impeaching the honesty of its members.

The whole question of such organisations is primarily that of accuracy, and, secondarily, that of utility. Primarily the question is, Are these movements based on a sound conception of human nature? To this the answer is emphatically, No. All of them take supernatural beliefs in some form or other as the essential condition of social activity. All of their members have instilled into them the notion that, apart from the belief in God and a future life, social effort for good is a freak of conduct that none but an idiot or a maniac would indulge in. The organic unity of the social structure, the mutual dependence of its parts, the natural consequences of actions as an adequate method of determining their relative value, are all lost sight of, with the ultimate result that, as these supernatural beliefs weaken with the growth of experience, there is only too often a weakening of the interest in social welfare, or, at best, chaotic and confused ideas on the subject.

For in but a small percentage of cures is the influence of such bodies permanent. It is safe to say that, of the young men and women who were so industriously singing hymns and saying prayers at the Convention, a large majority will, before they have reached thirty-five years of age, have dropped out of the movement altogether. Their interest in the supernatural will have weakened, if not have disappeared entirely, without their having gained a corresponding interest in social matters. The best years of their life—instead of having been spent in a mental discipline, a study of social facts and forces that will enable them to take a profitable part in the life around them—will have been employed in an intellectual dissipation that will leave them mentally destitute and the easy prey of the political or social sharper.

It is this tremendous misdirection and consequent waste of human energy that makes evangelical Christianity one of the gravest dangers to social growth. Imagine the benefit that might have accrued to society at large had the attention of the 25,000 or 30,000 who met at Alexandra Palace been centred on a single social problem, such as the housing question, the monopoly in land, or old-age pensions. True, each one of these questions was *mentioned* during the course of the Convention; but, in the long run, those who left the meetings would be spurred to little more than forming prayer

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meetings or getting additional members to their respective Churches.

Another important point lost sight of by those who praise such movements as the Society of Christian Endeavor is that interest in social questions is only simulated so long as there exists outside all religious organisations a strong reform opinion that is non-religious. It is a truism to say that reforms never commence inside the Churches. It is outside that they are born; it is outside that they struggle through the infantile stage and are nursed into maturity. Advanced ideas only find a footing inside the different religious bodies when it is no longer either possible or profitable to ignore their existence. And even then the social reform is kept strictly subservient to the religious interest. In other words, when the social instincts have grown so strong as to threaten the welfare of religious belief, they are exploited by priests and parsons in the interests of their respective Churches.

And this last circumstance leads to an understanding of the cases of individual improvement that are said to follow association with the various religious bodies. The case against these associations does not by any means demand a denial that such instances of improvement do not and cannot take place. The mere association of a number of people is alone sufficient to induce the growth of a certain class ethic, and so far to work for the maintenance of a certain code of conduct. This is done not only in religious organisations, but apart from them. All that need be pointed out is that what the Christian habitually ascribes to the influence of his supernatural beliefs is properly attributable to the purely social feelings. The regrettable feature is that the supernatural beliefs with which these feelings are associated react disastrously on their subsequent cultivation.

It would be unwise to close this article without noticing the remark that no such gathering would be brought together for any purely social purpose. If that be so, it carries with it Christianity's condemnation. In one form or another—Catholic or Protestant—Christianity has governed Western Europe for upwards of fifteen centuries. It has controlled people from the cradle to the grave. It could burn men and women for a difference of opinion, and can hardly plead lack of power to regulate their conduct. And, as a result, we are told, not shamefacedly, but boastfully, that our social sense is so little developed that it is easier to get young men and women to sing hymns than engage in useful social work, easier to get them to attend prayer meetings than work for the purely social welfare of their fellows. So much the worse for Christianity. Ruskin said once that the statement that the clergy were the only friends of the poor was the severest condemnation of the priesthood he had ever heard. It proved how little they had attended to the education of the rich. May we not say, in the same view, that the indifference of men and women to the crying wrongs and injustices of our existing civilisation is an indication of how little attention Christianity has paid to the social education of the people it has had under its charge, and a warning that the remedy for existing evils has to be sought in other directions than those hitherto pursued?

C. Cohen.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

Immense sums of money are being raised, under the name of Twentieth Century Funds, for the purpose of promoting the success of the Christian superstition in Great Britain. This money is independent of the ordinary revenues of the Churches, and will help to strengthen their hold upon the community; above all upon its younger members, who will be reached by some other of the various "social" agencies, which are found an effective substitute for the old dogmatic teaching.

This financial movement is initiated at a time when reaction is in the air, when the High Church is paramount in the Established Religion, when the Roman Catholic Church is growing ominously in wealth and power, when Denominationalism is triumphant in Elementary Education, and when the influence of Priestcraft is intensified by plausible and surreptitious methods, which do not directly challenge attention or excite public alarm.

It does not follow that a religion which, from an intellectual point of view, is in a state of decadence is therefore doomed to an immediate decease. The Roman Catholic Church was intellectually discredited in France, and no one expected its revival; but by a masterly policy of organisation, by the steady accumulation of resources, by well-planned and consistent political action, and by the capture of the Higher Education, this Church has raised itself once more to a commanding position, and has become by far the strongest of all the public forces in that country. This phenomenon may be repeated in Great Britain; and, lest it should be, the friends of Freethought are under a serious obligation to take timely and ample precautions.

Good intentions alone will not suffice; nor will courage, ability, and enthusiasm, without resources. The principles of modern warfare are carried into the regions of politics and religion. Existing society is based upon property, and power accompanies wealth. The war between reason and superstition will therefore be very largely decided by the means at the command of the respective armies. This truth is fully recognised by the leaders of Christianity, and should be as fully recognised, not only by leaders, but by all the supporters of Freethought.

In this spirit the National Secular Society's Conference resolved that a Twentieth Century Fund should be raised to counteract the special efforts of the Christian Churches. No definite figure is aimed at, or even suggested—at least for the present. What is hoped is that all Freethinkers who have any practical love for their cause will give as liberally as possible, according to their means and opportunities.

With regard to the security of this projected Fund, I have to say that, while all receipts will pass through the hands of the N. S. S. honorary treasurer, Mr. S. Hartmann, they will be paid into the banking account of the Secular Society, Limited, which is a legal Incorporation, and affords a perfect guarantee against the money being lost or alienated. The N. S. S. Executive has learnt by experience the trouble and insecurity of the method of Trustees. Moreover, the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, accepts the responsibility; and, as it consists almost exclusively of members of the N. S. S. Executive, there is no possibility of any sort of disagreement. I may, however, add my own personal pledge that, as far as I am concerned, the interests of the popular, unlegalised body shall be fully respected, and that its Executive shall be consulted in all matters relating to this Fund.

By the wish of the N. S. S. Executive, and of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, I have already made a preliminary appeal by private circular on behalf of this Fund, in order that the public appeal in the *Freethinker* and elsewhere might be initiated under the most favorable auspices. I shall presently give a list of the promises, in reply to that circular, which have reached me up to date. But before doing so I have a word to say to the great mass of the readers of this journal. Many of them, I daresay, cannot promise to contribute a sum which they think large enough to be entered in a list of donations. In order to meet their case I am authorised to arrange for two Shilling Weeks, such as the older readers of the *Freethinker* are familiar with. During the first week in October, and the first week in January, the "rank and file" of the party are earnestly invited to send me at least one shilling, and as many more as they can afford. Any number of shillings from any number of persons will be acceptable, and every one will be acknowledged in these columns.

On previous occasions of this kind a considerable proportion of contributors have taken the opportunity to write me a letter, stating their views of the work of the movement, and throwing out suggestions for its improvement. If they do the same on these forthcoming occasions, I promise them that their letters shall all be read, carefully considered, and as far as possible answered. It is good to hear from time to time what the "masses" are thinking. We really want their opinions, and it is sometimes found that the "lookers on," if I may so express it, see a good deal

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that escapes the attention of those who are zealously "playing the game."

And now for the list of donors up to date, with extracts in some cases from the letters conveying their promises.

The place of honor is due to the veteran Mr. J. Umpleby, of Blackburn. When this Fund was first mooted, some time ago, he forwarded his cheque for £20 towards it, which has since been held by Mr. S. Hartmann, the N. S. S. honorary treasurer. Mr. Umpleby is willing to make his donation £100 if four others will give the same amount, or £50 if nine others will give £50 each. Should his generous challenge be accepted the Fund will realise £500 in consequence.

The second place of honor is due to Major John C. Harris, R.E., who promised me £20 towards the Fund as soon as he heard of it, and forwarded me his cheque for that amount immediately on receiving my circular. That £20 is also in Mr. Hartmann's hands. Major Harris sent his donation at once as a stimulus to other friends to *give* promptly instead of merely *promising*. He thinks the money is sure when we have it, but never quite sure otherwise.

"A Friend" (a lady) promises £25, and Mr. Horace Seal another £25. Thus we have £90 from four contributors, which is a very good start.

I will now give the list of donations promised up to date, and then deal with some of the correspondence.

Donation List.

J. Umpleby, £20; Major John C. Harris, R.E., £20; "A Friend," £25; Horace Seal, £25; J. C. Banks, £10; W. Mumby, £5; J. F. Hampson, £4; D. Yule, £10; James Neate, £1; Mrs. Neate, £1; R. Davison, £2; G. J. Warren, £1; T. P. Stewart, £1 1s.; R. T. Nichols, £2 2s.; C. Girtanner, £10 10s.; David Watt, £1; C. J. Peacock, £5; A. H. Braine, £1 1s.; H. Trotman, 10s. 6d.; H. B. Dodds, 10s.; W. Garthwaite, 10s.; J. G. Dobson, 10s.; J. Barry, 10s.; T. H. Body, 2s. 6d.; J. Partridge, 10s. 6d.; Martin Weatherburn, 10s.; A. G. Lye, 5s.; E. Self, 5s.; L. Simpson, 5s.; T. Ollerenshaw, 10s.; W. Barks, 10s.; J. T. Ives, 1s.; J. Bullock, 5s.; A. F. Bullock, 2s. 6d.; C. Handley, 5s.; W. M. Constant, 3s.; W. R. Axelley, 10s.; D. Mitchell, £1; Mrs. Brown, 5s.; H. Payne, £1; D. P. S., £1; J. E. Kins, 5s.; C. D. Stephens, 10s. 6d.; W. H. Spivey, 10s.; M. Dye, 5s.

This represents a total of £156 4s. 6d., and I should very much like to see that amount doubled during the next week or so. There are scores, and perhaps hundreds, who could subscribe £1 or more to this Fund, and a multitude who could subscribe less, without missing what they gave. I beg them to send me their promises at once. The remittances can wait. It is not a question of what a Freethinker can give at this particular moment, but of what he can give some time before the close of the present year, which terminates the nineteenth century. Next year opens the twentieth century. Let it also open a new and bright period of Freethought activity.

One gentleman, who has not yet subscribed, has asked how the Fund will be expended. That will depend upon its amount. It is impossible to say anything definite at this stage. In any case, it will be expended in promoting and maintaining Freethought; and its disposition lies in the hands of two thoroughly representative bodies.

Another gentleman, who says he needs no assurance himself, and who thinks I am abominably ill-paid for my work, fancies that others may be pleased to know that none of the money raised will be spent upon myself. Well, all I can say is that this is extremely unlikely. It is certainly not contemplated. I think I have a right to point to the past. For more than ten years I have been President of the National Secular Society, in succession to the great Charles Bradlaugh. During that time I have worked very hard and done the party some service. No doubt I have made mistakes. The price of avoiding them is doing nothing. But one thing I have never done. I have not had a single penny of the National Secular Society's money. I have not charged it anything even for postages, and I have always paid my own expenses at the Annual Conferences. The Society's books prove this, and I may be excused from saying more; except, perhaps, that I have raised hundreds of pounds for the Society through the *Freethinker*, without making the smallest deduction for time, trouble, letters, or advertisements.

A member of the N. S. S. Executive, Mr. James Neate, who is in a position to know the facts at any rate, says on behalf of himself and his wife:—

> We trust your appeal will meet with the hearty response it deserves. We sincerely regret that the Freethought party in England has not more G. W. Footes to make such sacrifices and appeals for the cause. You stand out unique since the death of Charles Bradlaugh. All honor to you.

I would not have quoted this praise if it had not come from such a quarter. Mr. David Watt (Paisley) says:—

> I do hope the party will rally round you and show what stuff they are made of. We want a good supply of the sinews of war to fight superstition.

Mr. C. Girtanner, writing from Trieste, says:—

> I hope your never-ceasing efforts for the cause may be crowned with success, and I heartily wish you health and strength.

Mr. T. P. Stewart asks whether collecting cards or sheets will be issued. The answer is, Yes, as soon as the summer draws to a close. Mr. J. F. Hampson (Bolton) hopes to see "a long and strong list of donors." Mr. W. Mumby sends a long and pleasant letter, from which the following is an extract:—

> There is great credit due to you for forming the Secular Society, Limited, to prevent the N. S. S. from being defrauded of legacies and bequests, though I hope we shall not work any the less for the total repeal of the barbarous Blasphemy Laws. Yet I fear there is just a danger of some saying that "the Secular Society, Limited, has funds bequeathed by the late Mr. So and So, and let these be spent first; besides, Mr. Foote says that other legacies will come along in time." If this attitude were to be adopted generally, the Incorporation would not be an unmixed blessing.....Do we make anything like the monetary sacrifices we should be expected to if we belonged to the Wesleyans, Baptists, or other Christian sects?

Mr. J. C. Banks (Wolverhampton) hopes the Twentieth Century Fund "will be (what it deserves to be) a thorough success." Mr. W. H. Spivey (Huddersfield) regrets that the war has made business so bad, but he subscribes something, and means to collect a few pounds in the district. Mr. T. Ollerenshaw (Linthwaite) says:—

> I hope your appeal will prove successful, and that Freethinkers will not be behind Christians in finding the sinews of war. Let us hope that our opponents will not be able to say that we do not properly support our movement.

Mr. Martin Weatherburn (Cramlington), a veteran Freethinker, universally respected in his district, and everywhere else he is known, says:—

> I trust the response to your appeal will be such as to ensure the success of the Twentieth Century Fund. There is a great deal of hard work to be done before Secularism can be introduced to, and appreciated by, the masses of the people. I wish you may receive from the party such support, moral and financial, as will enable you to get through a very large share of it.

But I must bring this long article to an end. I shall have occasion to deal with the subject again (and again) during the next few months. For the present it suffices to say that the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund is now publicly launched, and that every Freethinker should do what he can to ensure it a prosperous career.

G. W. Foote
(*President, National Secular Society*).
(*Chairman, Secular Society, Limited*).

July 31, 1900.

The Bishop of Stepney, according to a contemporary, is the busiest man in London; he writes his sermons in trams and 'buses. Now we know why his discourses always seem so slow and jerky. No doubt a bishop would appear to be a busy man when, as it has been suggested, "he composes sermons at the same time he is making tracks."

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Acid Drops.

The assassination of the King of Italy is a shocking occurrence. It seems useless to remonstrate with the fool friends of freedom, as Ingersoll called them, who imagine that their cause can be promoted by murder. Assassination only plays the game of reaction. Once convince people that human life is at the mercy of reckless conspirators, and they will, out of mere self-preservation, throw themselves into the arms of a Savior of Society. The mass of men always feel the truth of Hume's saying, that anarchy is the worst form of tyranny. Laws and regulations, however bad or unjust, are instinctively recognised as preferable to the terror of uncertainty. It was the excesses of the French Revolution that paved the way for Napoleon.

Since Mr. Foote's article on "The Holy Kaiser" was in type the newspapers have been discussing what Emperor William really said at Bremerhaven. It seems that all the local newspapers that reported his speech agree in making him speak as follows: "When you meet the foe you will defeat him. No quarter will be given, no prisoners will be taken. Let all who fall into your hands be at your mercy. Just as the Huns, a thousand years ago, under the leadership of Etzel (Attila), gained a reputation in virtue of which they still live in historical tradition, so may the name of Germany become known in such a manner in China that no Chinaman will ever again even dare to look askance at a German."

This is a great deal worse than the words the Emperor is credited with in Mr. Foote's article. It seems that the Christian Kaiser wishes his German troops to imitate the exploits of the Huns under the terrible Attila. Perhaps he is looking forward to another pyramid of skulls. If this pious War Lord's policy is to obtain in the conflict with China, it will behove Englishmen to see that their contingent of troops are not placed under the supreme command of a German general —about which there is a strong rumor in the newspapers.

"Christian Socialism" was the subject of a recent address by the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse in the Wesleyan Chapel, Lowestoft. A correspondent of ours dropped in to hear what this colleague of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes had to say, and he was greatly surprised at what he heard. It was more like a Freethought lecture than a Christian discourse. The reverend gentleman was very anxious that nothing he said should be reported in the papers, and no wonder. Our correspondent's summary of the address is certainly startling. The following are some of Mr. Pearse's utterances: "Church and chapel would not make any substantial progress unless they catered for the material needs of the people. What was the good of saving a man's soul if his stomach was empty? You might give him a tract, but that would only make him swear, and so you were the cause of unnecessary profanity. But if you wrapped some food in the tract, you would be acting more sensibly, and the food, if not the tract, would be acceptable. We must make the churches more like the public-house, without the drink—more cheerful, better lighted, less formal, and altogether more free and easy, so that the working man will voluntarily come in and enjoy himself, as he does at present at the public-house."

The Rev. Mark Guy Pearse, continuing his address, said: "It is often thrown in my face that no great reform was ever started or even aided by the Church. Unfortunately it is only too true. The education movement owes nothing to the Church, the emancipation of slaves owes nothing to the Church, and the Temperance movement owes nothing to the Church; indeed, in the early days of that movement, if a man wanted to sign the pledge, he was obliged to go to an Infidel hall to do so, so much was the Church opposed to the movement. I am anxious, therefore, that the Church should do *something* to alter the present social evils and inequalities, and so prove that it really is of some use in the world. I am confident that the needed reforms will come—in fact, the air is full of them; but I am dreadfully afraid that they will come from agencies outside the Church, and the Church will be left high and dry. The Church has grown selfish, without any vitality, and each member thinks only of saving his own paltry soul, oblivious to all the misery and suffering around him. A Revolution is only a Reformation delayed, and if the Churches do not bestir themselves they will be overwhelmed by a gigantic avalanche which will sweep them away. The new orthodoxy is 'Love,' and the new heresy is 'Selfishness.'"

Our correspondent vouches for the substantial accuracy of this report, and he is a person on whom we can rely. It is easy to understand why the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse did not want that particular address reported. Unfortunately there was an unsuspected "chiel" amongst them "takin' notes" for the *Freethinker*. We have given our readers some of these interesting notes, and we should much like to see them reproduced in the *Methodist Times*.

The August number of the *Literary Guide*—an excellent publication, by the way—refers to the *Bible Handbook* as "written by Mr. Foote in collaboration with Mr. W. P. Ball." This is a curious blunder. The volume was really written by the Holy Ghost, if we accept the orthodox theory of inspiration; for it consists of a host of texts from the Bible, printed in a way to show its contradictions, absurdities, immoralities, obscenities, and unfulfilled prophecies. Messrs. Foote and Ball are not the authors, but the editors, of this collection. Their contribution to the volume consists of a preface, headlines, and occasional notes. And it may be said that the real value of the *Bible Handbook* lies in the fact that the Christian Scriptures are allowed to speak for themselves.

Bible Romances is described by the *Literary Guide* as "racy and scathing." "The more philosophic Rationalists," our contemporary says, "may deprecate such direct and uncompromising attacks upon the popular faith, but it is difficult to contest their necessity in these days of organised reaction." Difficult, indeed! After all, who *are* the "more philosophic" Rationalists? Is it meant that "direct and uncompromising" thinkers and writers are necessarily lacking in philosophy? If so, we must amend our judgments of Voltaire, Paine, and Ingersoll, to say nothing of Bradlaugh, who had more "philosophy" than the vast majority of his critics and detractors.

Persons who call themselves Rationalists should stick to the plain appellation, and not preface it with laudatory and invidious adjectives. It takes all sorts of people to make up a world, and it is very foolish to quarrel with the variety. It also takes all sorts of workers and advocates to make up a movement; and those who are fond of placing a special value on their own tastes and temperaments, generally forget that they differ from others precisely as much as others differ from them. Here, as elsewhere, a golden rule is "Live, and let live."

Our Tory and Christian government can spend heaps of money in all sorts of ways, but cannot afford to vote even the smallest sum to save millions of poor Hindus from a long and horrible death by starvation.

Christian Endeavorers are discussing whether drinking and smoking are sinful, but none of them refer to their only authority on the subject. Jesus Christ certainly did not smoke, but he had no opportunity of doing so, as smoking was apparently not invented then. Smoking is, therefore, an open question as far as his example is concerned. But drinking is not at all an open question. Jesus Christ drank what was going in his age and country. He took wine habitually. His last meal before his crucifixion was washed down with that liquor. Three years previously, according to the fourth Gospel, though the other evangelists say nothing about it, he was at a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, where he turned a huge quantity of water into wine to prolong the spree for the regulation period, which seems to have been the best part of a week amongst the Jews. Now, in our opinion, that settles the question. Every teetotal Christian sets himself up as more moral than his Savior.

The late Mr. Spurgeon gave up his glass of wine, under strong pressure from his church, as an encouragement to the weaker brethren, who probably tippled all the same. But when he was invited to discard his cigar also, he rebelled. He said that he drew the line of abnegation somewhere, and, so far from dropping his cigar, he intended to "smoke to the glory of God." And he did.

Several years ago a Salvation Army captain was at the head of his Sunday procession, marching backwards himself, with his face to the faithful, and his other part (presumably) to Old Nick. Suddenly he observed a big hulking fellow on the pavement smoking a short clay pipe, and looking rather contemptuously at the Blood and Fire show. "Take that pipe out of your mouth," the captain cried; "if the Lord had meant you to smoke he would have provided you with a chimney." "Well," said the lost one, "if the Lord had meant you to walk backward he would have turned your feet round." The captain collapsed.

By the way, the Rev. Mr. Sheldon, of Topeka, the well-paid hero of the "following-Jesus" battle, appears to hold a very precarious position in his own city. He says that his influence and reputation would be lost if he were once seen smoking. Dear, good, immortal Charles Lamb, if he were living here, would want to feel the fellow's bumps. Carlyle would wither him with an unprintable sarcasm. Tennyson would give him a most superb stare. Ingersoll would smile at him between the whiffs of a good Havana.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made, says the Psalmist. But what would he have said if he had known how a man may be patched up by modern science? A German army surgeon has been calculating the cost of repairing a man maimed in every conceivable way. Here is the bill:—False arms, £29; false legs, £28; false nose, £20; false ears, with artificial drums, £26; set of false teeth, £18; glass eyes, £6. Total, £127.

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It always seemed a trifle too much to believe that the spirit of prophecy was confined to Israel. If the *Peking Times* may be trusted, prophecy is not even confined to the human race, for they have a prophetic dog in the Celestial Empire. This marvellous animal foretold—in tones understood and interpreted by its owners—a recent storm. And the animal further predicts "gory encounters for the Chinese in the eighth moon." Probably, on investigation, that dog will turn out to be some "sad dog" of a journalistic joker who has imposed on the *Peking Times*.

The *British Weekly* is disturbed that cricket nowadays seems to be a greater draw than Christ—even in these days of Christian Endeavor meetings. It says: "We Christians have room in our sympathies for cricket, and football, and boat races. One wonders when there will be as much sympathy at 'Lord's' and Henley with our enthusiasm as there is at every great gathering of Christians with theirs." And the *British Weekly* may go on wondering till it realises that Christianity has alienated the masses by its own absurdities, and that one of the great public idols is "sport."

Fox-hunting parsons are apparently not extinct. The new master of the Cattistock Hounds is the Rev. E. A. Milne, and his most notable colleague is the Rev. E. M. Reynolds, who hunts the Coniston pack.

They don't seem to care much for the Mosaic law in the County Court at Rhyl. A plaintiff's pony had been kicked to death by a horse belonging to another man whom he sued. Plaintiff cited a verse in Exodus xxi., and suggested that a settlement should be made in accordance with its terms—namely: "If one man's ox hurt another that he die, they shall sell the live ox and divide the money of it, and the dead ox also they shall divide." This proposal was refused, and the case fought out on its merits, with the result that the plaintiff was non-suited.

The idea of asking "divine guidance" for a London music-hall seems to have shocked the *Sunday Companion*. Certainly it looks like superseding the authority of the London County Council, which has hitherto regarded itself as God Almighty in this connection. The matter has arisen in this way: The foundation-stone of the New Theatre of Varieties in Euston-road was recently laid. Amongst the company present at the ceremony was the Rev. J. H. Anderson, rector of Tooting, who invoked Divine guidance in the direction of the enterprise.

The *Sunday Companion* describes this as "extraordinary." But what is there really remarkable in it from a Christian point of view? If the Almighty concerns himself as intimately as we are told he does with mundane affairs, surely a new music-hall is one of the very institutions for which his guidance should be solicited.

Much criticism has been excited even in church circles by the programme for the Newcastle Church Congress. It is pointed out that almost every important social and moral question is avoided, and that politically and socially there is going to be little to differentiate it from a meeting of the Primrose League. There can be little surprise at this, for year after year the Church Congress contrives to distinguish itself by the utter inanity of its deliberations.

Professor Marshall-Hall, the occupant of the Ormond Chair of Music at Melbourne University, and brother of Marshall-Hall, the well-known barrister, has been creating a stir at the Antipodes, according to a correspondent of the *Topical Times*. Not only has he helped more to popularise good music in Australia than any living man, but he has occasioned several heated controversies by his pronounced heterodoxy.

First, we are told, he began to sandwich Neitzsche into his lectures to the students of Wagner; afterwards he published some poems of his own composition, which he entitled *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. Some time ago the University Council passed a resolution in which, after alluding to the alleged character of the poems, they condemned his "ostentatious parade of disbelief in Christianity or any form of theism, and of his contempt for those who hold such belief."

Nevertheless the Council decided the other day to ask him to stay on for another five years—a decision which has occasioned a great outcry on the part of the unco guid. Meanwhile, adds the *Topical Times*, Marshall-Hall's concerts and lectures are attended by enthusiastic crowds of admirers; and not Paderewski himself receives more ardent applause from the fair sex.

Mr. Joseph Hatton continues in his "Cigarette Papers" his caustic criticism of certain professed religionists, especially the Sabbatarians. In regard to the latter he observes that, "at Eastbourne the town magnates will not permit 'buses to run on Sunday, nor persons to bathe except very early in the morning. Eastbourne, delightful at other times, is a sad place on Sunday. You *can't* even get a Sunday paper, unless you order it long beforehand, or sneak into some back street to buy one surreptitiously."

In another note Mr. Hatton deals with the Rev. Dr. Lorimer, of Boston, U.S.A., and his views upon "turning the other cheek" to China. As Mr. Hatton rightly says, if we turned the other cheek in our day, the smiters would be always in the ascendant. He adds: "More than any other agency, it is the missionaries who have developed, to their harm and ours generally, the worst side of the Chinese, and if Europe is as wise as one hopes, she will prohibit in the future the entrance into China of any of her subjects for the purpose of preaching a religious propaganda endeavoring to make converts. As for England, if the whole of the missionary funds were diverted to the honest and Christian use of our own people, to the poor and destitute, to the disabled soldier, and to the families of the men who have laid down their lives for the Empire, the money would be put to a holier and better purpose than forcing a new religion upon ancient peoples."

The *Umpire* comments on the singular fact that the Sunday Closing Act of the amorous Charles is most popular with the authorities of towns by the sea. We have had instances of this in the North, the South, the West—very lately at Swansea—and now at Yarmouth in the East. Seriously, says the *Umpire*, it is more than time that this odious enactment was wiped off the Statute-book. We have many silly laws of one kind or another, but for egregious absurdity none equals this against "Sabbath-breaking" barbers, fruit-sellers, and tobacconists.

Sunday papers. What a dreadful "bogey" they are to pious Sabbatarians who read their Monday morning paper with apparent unconsciousness that it was practically produced on Sunday. The *Christian Herald* has the following note of lamentation on this subject: "The guaranteed circulation of the Sunday secular newspapers warrants the assumption that 4,000,000 or 5,000,000 people in this country devote part of the Lord's Day to a review of the stress, turmoil, sorrows, and vice of the week."

Well, perhaps there is not so much wickedness after all in reading a Sunday paper. There are working men who have been too busy during the week to read the "dailies" with their frequent efforts to appear to be supplying news when there is no news. The *Christian Herald* probably overlooks the fact that the *Freethinker* is nominally dated for Sunday, and is therefore specially a "Sunday *Secular* newspaper." Our pages are not filled with the "vice of the week" except occasional references to the vice of clergymen and ministers.

The real meaning of the whole of these protestations is this: In recent times, and particularly during the last few months, the Sunday papers have, with charming accord, made a dead set on various superstitions. Not simply the so-called sanctity of the Sabbath, but faith in foreign missions, has been attacked, and other kindred matters have been subjected to wholesome criticism. That is really where the shoe pinches in regard to Sunday papers.

Commenting on a letter addressed to the *Spectator* by Mr. T. B. Horsfall on the decline in the supply of clergy, the *Church Times* says it does not believe the falling off is due to unreadiness on the part of young men to offer themselves for a service in which there is no scope for the social reformer. "In our judgment," it says, "the advance of secularism lies at the bottom of our present troubles."

Golfing in a graveyard is a little rough on the native sentiment wherever the encroaching pastime may occur. It has happened in this instance at a Chinese burial-ground in Singapore. It is interesting to learn from the Christian devotee of the pastime that "the links are *very sporty*, the tombs serving for bunkers and other hazards." After some other details, it is not surprising to be informed that "the tombs are being slowly hacked to pieces by the wild efforts to get the balls out of the crevices in the bricks."

As the Chinese have a special regard for their ancestors—their memories and remains—this kind of desecration might have been supposed to be likely to occasion indignation. But what did that matter to Christian golfers? Nothing. And so they have slowly hacked the tombs to pieces with their "wild efforts."

The "old gentleman" is a polite way of referring to the Devil. He used to be called "Old Nick," etc., and there is a terrible indictment against him, especially in regard to his alleged temptation of Eve. Of course, he is now generally supposed to be dead, or rather never to have existed except in imagination. Notwithstanding these modern views, which seem to prevail mostly amongst laymen, it is rather astonishing to find the Bishop of Salford referring to Satan as an "old gentleman." Query: Is it right for a bishop to describe "the author of evil" as a gentleman—old or young?

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N. B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stonecutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

F. E. WILLIS.—Always pleased to receive cuttings.

F. J. GOULD.—Advertisement next week. See "Sugar Plums" this week.

R. JOHNSON (Manchester), in sending his promise of donation to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, says: "I hope every Freethinker will try to do his very best, if the amount is ever so small, to make this Fund a success. If every reader of the *Freethinker* contributed only one shilling, you would realise a considerable sum. Surely they can all do that, if not more, once in a century."

R. CHAPMAN.—See "Sugar Plums." Mr. Foote hopes to visit Shields again in the fall of the year.

M. DYE.—Mr. Foote will act on your advice as far as possible. He cannot but work hard, but he does not mean to kill himself. There is no immediate prospect of his being "lost" to the movement through the over-zeal you dread.

W. MUMBY.—Thanks for your encouraging letter, as well as for the promise. See our special article on the subject.

R. DAVISON.—Hope you found time when in London to call at the Freethought Publishing Company's new premises. When you call again, please ask to see *us*. We should like to see *you*.

D. P. S.—Yes, the heat *has* been excessive. Thanks for cheque and good wishes.

THERE was a blunder in our last issue. Mr. G. J. Warren was mentioned in connection with the Bethnal Green Branch, instead of the East London Branch.

E. ANDREWS.—You appear to have overlooked our article, in which the chief points of your letter in reply to the Rev. H. J. Alcock were already raised.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Late arrivals, since the list in our special article was closed 1—F. W. Donaldson, £1 1s.; A. W. Hutty, 2s.; Minnie, Willie, and Teddie Hutty, 3s.; R. Johnson, £2 2s.

H. A. T. suggests that we should print a list of newsagents who are known to supply the *Freethinker*, so that persons into whose hands a copy falls accidentally may be able to purchase others without undue trouble. We have long meant to do this, but the difficulty is to get a good list of such newsagents. Perhaps our readers throughout the country will help us in this matter.

T. OLLERENSHAW.—Remittance received with thanks.

A. W. HUTTY.—Cheque placed to your credit. Never mind the smallness of the amount. The Fund will do very well if all contribute as much.

H. HULM.—Abridgments of great works, like Hume's *History of England*, may be useful to students preparing for our curious modern "examinations," but other persons should leave them severely alone. Refer to Hume himself, and you will find the story of Elgiva, which we referred to last week, narrated by a master hand. Ask the other question, please, when Mr. Foote returns from his holiday.

MARTIN WEATHERBURN.—Your good opinion is always valued.

E. SELF.—It is an excellent way of advertising this journal to pass it on to others after reading it. Thanks. Mr. Foote is in good health, though a bit tired.

W. BARKS.—Of course the donation can be paid in two instalments, or any other way you please. We are sorry to hear of your personal troubles.

T. C. F.—Certainly working men should contribute, if only a trifle. All should do something. Those who can only contribute a shilling or two will find a good opportunity during the Shilling Weeks. See our Freethought Twentieth Century Fund appeal.

J. H. L.—Much obliged. See "Acid Drops."

ANGLO-INDIAN points out that Mr. Neale was apparently mistaken on one point in his otherwise excellent article on "Christ on the Stage." He seems to have thought that the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play was enacted yearly, whereas it is enacted every ten years, and has been so since 1634. This correspondent, who is thanked for his kind and encouraging letter, does not like to see any errors in his "favorite paper."

REV. G. BROWN, also referring to Mr. Neale's article, begs to say that "Joseph Mayer, the late Christus, is *not* dead, from any complaint, vulgar or otherwise, but still acts in the Passion Play, taking the part of the Choragus." Mr. Neale is generally so well-informed and accurate that we can only conclude that he was misled by some newspaper report, which had *not* been corrected. As a veteran journalist, he knows how far the press is from being infallible.

R. AXELLEY.—We note that your 10s. to the Twentieth Century Fund will, if possible, be made into £1.

W. H. SPIVEY.—We are far from desiring anyone to contribute beyond his means. No doubt a good many have suffered through the war.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for cuttings.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

MESSRS. FOOTE, Watts, Cohen, and Moss were duly at Stratford Grove on Sunday evening at 7 o'clock for the West Ham Freethought Demonstration. Miss Vance, Mrs. Foote, and two of her daughters, were also in the brake, to give it a cheerful appearance. But, alas, the Demonstration did not take place. The rain was as punctual as the demonstrators. Precisely at 7 it began its antics. First there were a few drops, by way of raising a hope that the storm might pass over. Then it grew worse, and in less than five minutes the heavy clouds were pouring down a perfect deluge. No shelter was near, and in spite of coats, mackintoshes, and umbrellas, the whole party were speedily swamped. The ladies were in a pitiable plight, and the men were wet through to their shirts. One could hardly call it rain; the drops ran all together, and the wet descended in sheets. Mr. Wilson's fine horses cowered under it, and could hardly relish the consolation of their nosebags. In the circumstances, the Demonstration had to be abandoned. The speakers could not stop there with drenched clothes and water in their very boots. Moreover, when the rain abated, after more than half an hour, the sky was still threatening, and it would have been folly in every way to persist.

Mr. Sims and other members of the West Ham Branch committee quite agreed that the Demonstration should be postponed. They too were drenched. Mr. Foote could do no more than promise that a Sunday afternoon should be spared for a Demonstration later on in August.

Towards 8 o'clock, it appears, a good many people gathered at Stratford Grove. They had kept indoors during the storm and were *not* wet through, and we hear that some of them were indignant at the absence of the speakers who *were* wet through. One anonymous correspondent has favored us with a rather abusive letter on the subject. But the complaint is really ridiculous. There is a limit to the endurance (some would call it foolhardiness) even of Secular lecturers. It was not their fault if the Christian Evidence people turned out dry and held a meeting there subsequently. Those people were nearer home, and the Freethought speakers had great distances to travel before they could get rid of their sopping raiment. Let us have a little common sense, if you please. The Demonstration will be held yet. We have held several highly successful ones, and a single hitch is hardly worth a jeremiad.

The Brockwell Park and Victoria Park demonstrations are also postponed until later in August. Miss Vance is making the necessary arrangements with the County Council, and a definite announcement will appear as soon as possible, probably in next week's *Freethinker*. The postponement is in consequence of Mr. Foote's annual holiday, which he is obliged to take a little earlier than he intended.

Mr. Foote's holiday will not be a complete one. Unfortunately he cannot as yet drop work altogether for the briefest space of time. He will be at the seaside, but he will contribute his usual quantity of writing to the *Freethinker* and also deal with such correspondence as demands immediate attention. A holiday in these circumstances is better than nothing, but it is not an ideal one. It is thirteen years since Mr. Foote had a clear week away from his work, which is in many ways very exacting.

The N. S. S. Annual Children's Excursion, under the auspices of the Executive, is fixed for Saturday, September 1.

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The youngsters, of both sexes, will be driven to a suitable farm, northwards from London, in brakes; and ample provision will be made for their feeding and recreation. Full particulars will be published in due course. Meanwhile the friends who are in the habit of contributing towards the expenses of this function are invited to forward their contributions to Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C. Whatever differences may exist on other matters, we can all agree about giving the children a long happy day in the country, away from the smoke and noise of London, with the great free sky over their heads and the delightful springy turf under their feet. For the children, if you please. Find the money for their ride, their cakes, milk, and lemonade, and their games and prizes.

At the last meeting of the N. S. S. Executive the matter of the approaching School Board elections came up for consideration. It was felt that a fight for "secular education" should be made, but it was also felt that both money and candidates would have to be found if the fight were to be at all worthy of the cause. But the holiday season is scarcely the time to deal with a problem of that size. What the Executive resolved to do at once was to call a Conference in London, early in September, of all bodies favorable to "secular education." Upon the result of that Conference will depend the action which the N. S. S. Executive will take before and during the elections. A sub-committee was appointed to see to the calling of the Conference, consisting of Messrs. T. Shore, G. J. Warren, and C. Cohen. They met on Monday evening at Mr. Foote's office, he sitting *ex officio* as President, and drew up their plans, as to which more will be said in our next issue.

Mr. W. Heaford lectured on Sunday afternoon in Victoria Park to a large but noisy audience. Certain members of the Christian Evidence Society have for some time made a dead set at him, for what reason is not apparent. At every lecture of his in Victoria Park this summer the same half-dozen or so of C. E. S. rowdies have been guilty of villainous noise and interruption. If the police don't interfere to keep order, the Freethinkers will have to do the job themselves—as they mean to if necessary. Freedom of speech is one thing; licence of disorder is another. Mr. Heaford attended in the Park to lecture in the evening, but the deluge settled his meeting on that occasion.

The South Shields Branch excursion last Sunday was a record success. Five brakes and waggonettes turned out full for the picnic to Holywell Dene. Unfortunately a smart fall of rain drove all the party under cover on their arrival, but that was the only drawback. After a substantial tea, music, etc., at Hartley Mill and Silver Hill, instead of the usual speeches under trees, a drive was arranged by Seaton Delaval Hall and Avenue. Visitors were present from Newcastle and Sunderland.

Mr. S. Hartmann, the N. S. S. honorary treasurer, has gone for several weeks' holiday in Germany. His health had not been of the best for some time, and the hot weather did not improve his condition. His doctor ordered him away from London as quickly as possible. Mr. Hartmann's many friends will be glad to see him home again all the better for the rest and change. The Freethought movement has no truer servant.

Mr. C. Levi, of Cincinnati, who entertained Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts when they were together in that city, in November, 1896, is now on a visit to England, after "doing" Germany and Paris. Mrs. Levi accompanies him, but we are sorry to say that she is suffering from indisposition. She and her husband came with Mr. Watts to West Ham on Sunday evening, but the rain compelled her to take shelter some distance from the meeting-place, and she had a very unpleasant experience without the compensation which she hoped to enjoy, of hearing several of the leading Freethought speakers in England together.

Mr. Levi pressed Mr. Foote to come over to America this year and attend the Freethought Congress, which is fixed to take place at Cincinnati. Mr. Foote was obliged to decline the invitation. He has too many irons in the fire at present that want careful watching. Some other year the conditions may be more favorable for a brief visit to the United States.

The Leicester Secular Society has for some time been organising a bazaar to take place in its Hall from Saturday, September 22, to Tuesday, September 25, inclusive. Freethinkers are invited to send all sorts of articles, books, pictures, etc., though useful articles would be preferred. Whatever is sent should be in by the end of August. Address to Mr. F. J. Gould, Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester. Freethinking tradesmen might assist, with profit to themselves perhaps, by advertising in the Bazaar book-program. The object of the bazaar is to raise money for the continuance and development of the Society's work. We hope it will be thoroughly successful.

Mr. and Mrs. George Cross, whose advertisement will be found in the *Freethinker*, finding that photographs of Mr. Foote are difficult to obtain, have offered to supply copies of a cabinet photograph at one shilling, and also a large size, twelve by ten inches, when mounted, at half-a-crown. Miss Vance has constituted herself a judge, and declares both portraits to be excellent. Orders should be sent to her direct. The proceeds of the sale will be handed over to the Twentieth Century Fund.

Some weeks ago we invited friends to send us the names and addresses of newsagents willing to display a weekly contents-sheet of the *Freethinker*. A good many were forwarded to us, but we are anxious to obtain a good many more. Will our friends all over the country kindly give this matter their attention? We are prepared to post the contents-sheet to newsagents every Wednesday, so that they may display it concurrently with the earliest sale of the paper. We may add that the contents-sheet always contains some striking headlines, calculated to arouse curiosity and excite interest; and newsagents who display it afterwards find an increase in the number of purchasers.

The National Secular Society.

Report of Monthly Executive Meeting, held on Thursday, July 26, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C. (the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair). There were also present Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, B. Munton, J. Neate, H. Stace, F. Schaller, T. Shore, G. J. Warren, C. Watts, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Seven new members were admitted: from Birmingham five, Bethnal Green two.

The President reported that, as a result of the circular he had been asked to issue concerning the Twentieth Century Fund, he had already received cheques and promises amounting to about £150. It was moved by Mr. Heaford, seconded by Mr. Gorniot: "That the President be asked to appeal through the *Freethinker* on the basis of the preliminary circular, and that the editor of the *Freethinker* be asked to arrange for two shilling weeks." Carried unanimously.

The Secretary was instructed to arrange the Children's Excursion by brakes to Barnet, on Saturday, September 1.

The forthcoming School Board Election was discussed, and on the motion of Mr. Shore, seconded by Mr. Warren, it was moved: "That a sub-committee be appointed to organise a Conference, as early as possible in September, to discuss the question of Secular Education, and the policy to be adopted at the coming School Board Election." This being carried, Messrs. T. Shore, C. Cohen, and G. J. Warren were elected as a committee for this purpose.

The residuary matters in connection with the delegation to the Paris Congress were adjourned, and the meeting closed.

E. M. Vance, *Secretary*.

Are Englishmen Irreligious?

"In some respects," says the *Church Times*, "Englishmen are the most irreligious people in the world. There is probably no other nation of which so large a proportion of the adult population entirely neglects the form of public worship. Fifty years ago there was already some uneasiness on this score, and the rough census of 1851 was thought to reveal a deplorable state of things. Every attempt at enumeration made more recently has shown a decrease in the number of worshippers—a decrease which, in face of a rapidly-increasing population, is enormous. We speak of adults, for children are sent to church and to Sunday-school in large numbers. They are packed out of the way by the mothers. But for the vast majority their religious practice ends with their school-days. The statistics of Dissenting sects in particular show a numerical relation of Sunday-school scholars to adult members which is full of suggestion." Well, if the case is so bad as all this, a pertinent inquiry is: What are the clergy and ministers doing?

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

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Baal and Astarte.

When a man takes lusty delight in eating, or basking in the sun, or bathing, or amorous caresses, he is exercising a more primitive part of his nature than that which finds a pleasure in helping a cripple or in contemplating the sky and its stars. These activities engage his physical, moral, and intellectual qualities respectively. The physical qualities must be first developed, in order to form the base and stimulus to the rest. The man must eat and digest before he can enjoy the sweets of friendship, and poetry itself would never have issued from the lyre if men had not drawn the blood of enemies and courted the favors of maidens. In religious evolution, therefore, we find the worship of physical nature before we perceive the rise of moral and intellectual forms of deity. Baal and Astarte preceded—and necessarily preceded—the Redeemer who loved mankind and the God who (according to the doctors) planned the structure of animals, sketched the orbits of the planets, and mapped out the course of history in the Old World and America.

Who was Baal? The term Baal signifies owner or possessor. In Semitic regions (Arabia, Palestine, Syria, etc.) the worship of various Baals was widespread. Each town or district had its divine president. There was a Baal of Tyre, a Baal of Tarsus, a Baal of Mount Hermon, etc. The god Melkart was the Baal of Tyre, and to the ferocious Baal of Carthage human sacrifices were presented. It is often supposed that Baal is a sun-god, and no doubt the god very frequently takes on that character. We note, for instance, the story of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. These prophets expected the god to fling fire from heaven in order to consume their slaughtered bulls, and it was at noonday—the point when the sun attains its height—that they redoubled their prayers, and cut themselves with knives in the hope of rousing Baal's feelings by the sight of blood. But, in a general way, Baal represented the gifts of the physical world—flocks, herds, crops, rain, a numerous family, and good luck. Occasionally he would assume a more special function, as in Baal-zebub (or Baal-zebul), the Lord of Flies, the god who controls the swarm of summer insects. But Biblical scholars, who are as fond of new interpretations as a child of new toys, are now of the opinion that Baal-zebub is a mocking name applied by the Jews to a Canaanite god whose real title was Lord of the High House. The "High House" might refer to his temple, or the mountain-crags over which he sat enthroned. Another divinity of this group was Baal-shamem, the Lord of Heaven, who seems to have resembled the Zeus of Greek mythology, and whose dominion extended over the clouds, the thunder, and the measureless blue beyond. Apart from all the niceties of the commentators, it is clear enough that Baal was the bountiful lord who provided for all material wants. His worshippers begged from him the treasures of the spring and the luscious fruits of autumn. They offered him choice samples from their flocks and sheaves from their harvest in token of their gratitude. On hill-tops ("high-places") especially they gathered to celebrate his praise; for there the air was sweetest, the view most exhilarating, and the sense of mastery over the earth the keenest; and there the sons of the village piped on the reed, whirled in the dance, shouted the hilarious song, and exchanged rude jokes with the women-folk. In the festivals of Baal the blood ran riot, and the pulse beat in harmony with the vital waves of air and sun and generative instinct. No wonder that, at such times, the eyes of youths and girls shot fire, and rustic arbors were set apart for the couples who deemed love the richest gift of kindly Baal.

One easily concludes, from the merest glance at these rustic arbors, that Baal must be yoked with a goddess. Accordingly the worship of Baal was linked with that of Astarte, the Queen of Heaven (also called Ashtaroth). This Astarte originally came from Babylon, where she was known as Istar, the patroness of the planet Venus. She was adored by the multitudes of the Mesopotamian plain, the peasants of Syria, the mechanics of Phœnicia, and the islanders of Cyprus. In her person were combined the ideas of motherhood and protection. From her womb poured the life-giving supplies for human needs, and her strong hands defended the rights of her children. In other words, she was the image of early woman, the child-bearer and the strong and passionate guardian of the primitive home. Istar had temples at Uruk (on the Euphrates river) and elsewhere, and at these temples certain priestesses were retained as sacred harlots. Orthodox writers are accustomed to speak of the office of the *Kadesha* or consecrated harlot as an abomination and obscenity. In this case what one sees depends upon the eye. Where some people see repulsive prostitution, I can see only a simple, crude custom, expressive of men's wonder at the phenomena of generation and maternity. A later piety succeeded in veiling the sex-functions under a curse of embarrassment and shame. I should prefer the frank phallicism of the priestess of Astarte to the desperate lapse of womanhood in the streets of European cities.

The worship of Baal and Astarte prevailed among the early Hebrews. Names of famous personages in Jewish history included the very name of the god. Thus the warrior-judge Gideon was also known as Jerub-*baal*; Saul had a son Esh-*baal*, and David gave the name of *Baal*-jada to one of his children. When the prophets angrily denounced the religious ceremonies practised on "high places," they were pioneers leading the Jewish people to a new, and, in some respects, more refined conception of the deity. The *Kadesha* was a familiar figure in primitive Israel, and the reformers who expressed their protestantism in the book of Deuteronomy endeavored to abolish the sacred harlot (Deut. xxiii. 17). Even down to the times of Jeremiah and Ezekiel the older creed and ritual lingered on, cherished by the less enlightened sections of the population, and condemned in the vigorous orations and writings of the stricter Theists. Hebrew philosophy conquered nature-worship. The robust old Baal and his strenuous queen had to retire before a paler and more ethereal divinity. The Yahveh of the reformed Hebrew theology had no consort at his side, and the feminine element was for some considerable time excluded from the Christian heaven. At length the figure of Mary appeared, and Roman Catholicism made the Madonna into a tender and attractive goddess. Singular to remark, the religion of Rome did not take the further necessary step of restoring virility and health to the person of the God-man. In the legends of the Middle Ages, and in the modern crucifix, one beholds Christ in the form of an emaciated and agonising victim on the tree.

The restoration must be accomplished. Baal and Astarte have not perfected their mission. If they erred too much on the side of the rude joy of appetite and expanding life, the Christian system erred too much on the side of mortification and unnecessary (because unprofitable) discipline. Human nature cries out for free play; it also, in its profounder depths, asks for training and chastening. Puritanism, from the time of the Pharisees to the age of Methodism, has had its masterful period. Within the limits of refinement and mutual respect, we must now widen the active range of our sport, music, dance, and merriment. Once more we must rejoice in the sunlight, and take a pleasure in the exercise of natural function and capacity. No longer need we bestow Christian culture on the soul, and we may not relapse to the coarse plane of ancient Baal and Astarte. We want a religion that shall care neither for the soul nor the body, but for manhood, womanhood, childhood, health, happiness, progress, love. In the new order of thought the physical and the intellectual will seek a beautiful junction, in which both shall be free and both of service. When that happens we shall all think more of William Blake and Walt Whitman.

F. J. Gould.

The Parson—"Learn to be content, my good man. The little mouths are never sent without food to feed them." The laborer (father of ten)—"Ah, parson, but the mouths are sent to my home and the food to yours."—*Chicago News.*

"I hate this day," said an Irishman to an Englishman in the course of an ocean voyage. Then, at the latter's look of surprise: "It's Friday, and I hate fish. I'll tell you what," with a sigh, "I'll be pretty badly sold if you fellows get to heaven, after all."

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Correspondence.

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—As I am about to leave England for a short time, I shall be unable to continue this discussion with Mr. Ball; but perhaps I may be permitted to offer a few valedictory remarks.

To review the matter, Mr. Gould informed us some time ago that the word "religion" denoted certain moral qualities. I therefore took the liberty of pointing out that, if this were true, then he, as an opponent of religion, styled himself an opponent of these moral qualities. To this he rejoined, somewhat irrelevantly, that he distinguished between religion and theology, which are really two states of the same thing. Mr. Ball then took up the parable with his favorite phrase about somebody having said that religion was "morality touched with emotion." It seems a funny thing to touch it with; and the phrase labors under the disadvantage that it does not describe the characteristics of any religion known to history. After ridiculing my citation of "Religion a system of faith and worship," Mr. Ball tells us that this is "one of the widely-accepted definitions of the word." What other widely-accepted definition there is I do not know; and, if it is admitted, there is nothing left to argue about.

Mr. Gould gave to his conception of "religion" the title of "Objectionable Religion." The only discoverable tenet of this religion is disregard of the Queen's English, not to mention certain vague philological assumptions about words habitually changing their meanings, or having no fixed meaning at all. On May 27 Mr. Ball informed us that language was "more or less figurative, poetical, metaphorical, etc.," which would appear to imply that it was incapable of being definite about anything. Nevertheless, after thus apparently denying that words had any meaning, he has written 5,120 of these meaningless words in discussing the subject.

However nebulous "Objectionable Religion" may be, it yet seems needful to advocate it in precisely the same way, and with the same words, as the ordinary religions we are bothered with. Mr. Ball assures us that the adherents of Objectionable Religion are the only people who attempt to further the good of others; that the opponents of O. R. are flippant, are destitute of moral emotions, without faith in high principles, destitute of conscience, holding nothing sacred, etc. We are furthermore assured by the same gentleman that it is irrelevant to mention the crimes and atrocities which have always been associated with religion. Readers of the *Freethinker* will recognise that all this is the ordinary stock-in-trade of the religious controversialist.

If I understand Mr. Ball rightly, the adherents of "Objectionable Religion" are the only Secularists who have ever done anything to benefit mankind; in fact, the only Secularists who have any spark of virtue left in them at all. I might be permitted to suggest, therefore, that they should assemble in their thousands in the Alexandra Palace, in order to afford the world the elevating spectacle of such a galaxy of righteousness. And if they would include a few trophies in the shape of reclaimed drunkards, reformed burglars, and converted parsons, who have experienced saving grace through the misuse of the English language, they might even influence such abandoned publicans and sinners as myself.

In the meantime, however, I would point out that the object of defining anything is to enable one to recognise the article when it is met with. For instance, if we are told that a "quadruped" is an animal with four legs, we may know that an animal with two legs is not a quadruped, and an animal with six legs is not a quadruped either. Mr. Ball has favored us with several epigrams about "religion," none of which is of the slightest assistance in identifying a religion when we meet with one. To state a case. The vikings had temples, and had various ideas about the gods as described in the Eddas. But did they have a religion? If religion consists in "morality touched with what-do-you-call-it," then the vikings had no religion. If religion consists in "a feeling of absolute dependence," or "faith in the moral order of the universe," or "morality become conscious of the free universality of its concrete essence," or "the worship of humanity," then the vikings had *no* religion, because all these ideas were quite foreign to them. If, however, religion be "a system of faith and worship," then the Eddas give us a system of faith, and the temples prove the worship. Consequently the vikings *had* a religion. And I rather fancy that even Mr. Ball will agree that the vikings had a religion, notwithstanding that all his epigrams would expressly exclude them. At any rate, everyone who has written on the subject has mentioned the Religion of the Eddas. If anything is not a system of faith and worship, it is not a religion. Even Mr. Ball has a glimmering of this truth, though somewhat obscured, as usual, by side issues, for he would rightly exclude *pure* Buddhism from the class of religions, though ordinary Buddhism is admittedly a religion. And he also remarks that it is doubtful whether Shamanism and the superstitions of the lower races are really religions; the doubt, of course, being as to whether they can be described as systems of faith and worship or not. No one ever asks if Shamanism consists of "Thingummy touched with emotion."

If people have any difficulty in framing definitions of "religion," it is because they are trying to frame something that will serve for edification, and because they are endeavoring to disregard the actual facts of religion, and the actual history of religion.

Mr. Gould and Mr. Ball both seem to imply that they have a vague notion that "religion" stands for virtue or benevolence. The origin of this erroneous association of contrary ideas is, of course, to be found in the ordinary polemical assertion that those who do not profess any system of faith and worship are thereby marked off as immoral. Constant reiteration of this falsehood has such an effect on the minds of some people that they are unable to shake themselves free from it and look the facts fairly in the face. But it is most astonishing of all to find persons calling themselves Freethinkers so dominated by mendacious theological libels as to imagine that they are justified in employing the word "religion" in the sense of virtue (virtue! of all things). Such an aberrant state of mind, and such a source for the error, will explain, though it will not excuse, Mr. Ball's anxiety to charge other people with the usual theological list of bad qualities. It is an unfailing characteristic of religion that its professors invariably substitute abuse for argument.

The periodic discussions upon this word show us that people can read about "religion" every week in the *Freethinker* without ever discovering what it means; and we need not be surprised that it takes so long to convert the world to Freethought when it is so difficult to convince those of our own household. Theologians are naturally solicitous to raise false issues about "religion," because it prevents people from grasping the real facts of the case; but it should be the object of the Secularist to acquire a definite idea of the meaning of the word, and to comprehend why honest, moral, and benevolent beings should conceive it their duty to oppose "religion" in all its phases, and under all its disguises.

Chilperic.

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—"Chilperic's" defence, that he used the term "objectionable religion" out of "ordinary politeness" as a label which Mr. Gould applied to himself, would be a good joke in a farce. In the course of his letters "Chilperic" has spoken of his own "obtuseness" and of his "inherent Philistinism"; but I cannot see that "ordinary politeness" requires that I should seek to pin these labels on him in as prominent a position as possible. Mr. Gould, moreover, certainly did not mean that *he* regarded his own kind of religion as "objectionable." He only represented *opponents'* views of the matter, just as we might if we spoke of ourselves as "dreadful infidels" or "terrible Atheists."

I may, perhaps, be pardoned for explaining yet once more that the word "religion," when adopted by secular reformers like Mr. Gould or John Stuart Mill, is *not* a meaningless term, as "Chilperic" continues to assert in spite of all protests and explanations to the contrary, but is the equivalent of such phrases as *emotionalised morality, devotion to the moral ideal* (*i.e.*, to what one regards as highest and best), *practical worship of goodness or moral beauty, love of righteousness or right conduct or virtue or duty, a moral and emotionalised system of belief and conduct founded on fact* (*i.e.*, on human nature, science, philosophy, etc.) *instead of fiction*, and so forth. Perhaps "ordinary politeness" may at length induce "Chilperic" to notice his opponents' main point of view, as well as the uncomplimentary label which his paradoxical kind of politeness leads him to employ so readily.

The request to explain what ordinary religion is may be met by defining it as (1) a system of belief and conduct founded on supernaturalism or superstition, and (2) the subjective emotionalised state of mind, virtuous or otherwise, induced or enjoined by that system.

The challenge to explain why the ordinary or superstitious kind of religion has been so mischievous may be sufficiently met by pointing out that its basis is falsehood or delusion, and that error is naturally the parent of serious evils.

I fail to see why I should be called on to explain how much religion "will add to the rates when we get it in the Board schools." The fact is that it has been there for many years. What it has added to the rates is not easily ascertained; but if "Chilperic" really thinks the information essential for his arguments, he should hunt it up or calculate it for himself, and not expect me to do the work for him.

The references to the lady and the magistrate are mere caricature, and need no reply.

In answer to Mr. Frederick Ryan's letter, I may say that I do not admit that the word "Christian" could be adopted on exactly the same grounds as the word "religion." The derivation of the word forbids in the one case, and not in the other. "Christian" is, moreover, a narrower and more sectarian term than the broad and comparatively universal term "religion"; and I am not aware that any prominent members of our Secular Party are annexing the word. We have to draw the line somewhere. I, for my part, draw it at the word "Christian," but would not erect any absolute barrier against the admission of the word "religion."

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As to Mr. Ryan's second point, I fail to see that my argument implies that we may "use words indiscriminately." To show by examples, as I did, that Mr. Ryan's appeal to the verdict of the majority was not decisive, is neither "meaningless" nor the same thing as justifying unrestrained licence in the use of language. The distinction between "usage" and "inference" appears to me to be of little moment; for the inference that godlessness means immorality determines the sense in which such words are commonly employed. By means of this distinction Mr. Ryan practically sets aside his former contention that common usage must settle the value we attach to words. He then appeals to a superior minority on the question of the meaning of the word "religion." But if "most educated persons and most dictionaries *do* define religion as involving theological belief," such a limited and exclusive definition is not binding on anyone, seeing (as I have several times pointed out) that it would exclude Buddhism, ancestor worship, etc., which know nothing of *theos*, and that many educated persons suggest and accept definitions of religion which are independent of all forms of superstition.

"Verbal scrupulousness" is good, but may easily be carried to excess. Convenience, conciseness, expressiveness, etc., are of great practical importance, and often carry the day against mere verbal scrupulousness. Astronomical almanacks still have columns headed "sun rises," "sun sets," etc., although every intelligent schoolboy knows that such terms embody exploded errors. I imagine that the inconvenience involved in the abolition of such expressions would hardly be repaid by the more "rapid advance" in astronomy that might possibly ensue.

When I spoke of the "critical or fault-noticing turn of mind," I included myself in the remark, so that it was not directed solely or exclusively against those who object to the use of the word "religion." According to Mr. Ryan's rather conflicting statements, it is "extraordinary" (or out of the common), and also at the same time "not uncommon," that a critic should disparage criticism. That I *disparaged* "the more exclusively critical or fault-noticing turn of mind" as compared with the constructive, hard-working, non-disputatious character, is true to a certain extent—for I see nothing extraordinary or reprehensible in preferring deeds to words, or goodness to cleverness—but I cannot at all agree with Mr. Ryan that I condemned criticism. I condemned unfairness and illiberality in criticism, and I deprecated internecine criticism of a kind calculated to weaken our none-too-numerous party by wounding and estranging many of its most valuable members.

I fail to perceive that I used the words "constructive" and "destructive" improperly, but I cannot undertake to discuss all side issues that may be brought forward by opponents.

W. P. Ball.

CHRIST AND THE STAGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—In reading the article in a late number of the *Freethinker*, "Christ on the Stage," I observe that the writer—at least, by omitting to note the fact, if aware of it—implies that the "Passion Play" has not been exploited in contemporaneous times on the professional stage with a professional cast of characters.

It has occurred to me, if it is not generally known, that, following verbatim—albeit some scenes were of a necessity eliminated—the "story" of the New Testament, a play *has* been evolved from the "supposed" life and death of Christ; *has* been *produced* in a theatre, and enacted by a company of professional players. It might be interesting to your readers to hear something of the history of the production, and the startling sensation it made.

However, should you, Mr. Editor, find that what I shall write savors of ancient history, you may be able to make room for my communication in your—I am sure—capacious, and often-times plethoric, waste-basket.

The "story" of the "Passion" was dramatised by Mr. Salmi Morse, a then well-known dramatist and playwright (since deceased), and was "brought" out in San Francisco, Cal., U.S.A., at the San Francisco Theatre, some eighteen years ago. The play was entitled, as is the "Ober-Ammergau Festival," *The Passion Play*, and "ran" for exactly seven consecutive nights (the theatres are open on Sunday evenings in the Western States of America), when its projectors were forced by the authorities to "take it off the boards."

Popular opinion and prejudice, incited by the clergy, who, it was claimed by those favoring the production, were jealous of the "conversions" made by the play and, incidentally, the actors, became too strong, and the play was withdrawn. Before its first representation a representative clergyman of a representative church called upon the clergy of America to appoint a *special hour of prayer*, bidding all Christians to unite in a petition to God that he send one of his thunderbolts upon the "San Francisco Theatre" at the moment when the actor, who was to personate Christ, stepped before the footlights; that the thunderbolt be so charged that it not only crush the actor—Mr. James O'Neill by name, and himself a devout Catholic—but also his associates in the play and the audience assembled. Actual prayer-meetings (special) took place, not only in San Francisco, but in many churches throughout the *States*, and the crazy *elect (?)* outvied each other in the awfulness of their denunciations, and those of the "elect (?)" who were known to be "liberal" *objected*, but in a milder manner.

That the *prayers were not answered* is superfluous to add, otherwise the world would need no reminder of the spectacle of thousands of good men and women, and innocent children, crushed by a good God's thunderbolt. It is, however, a commentary, coincident and remarkable, that the rectory or parsonage of the pastor who conceived that "special hour of prayer" was some months after burned to the ground, leaving not one stick or stone upon the other.

I would like, and you had space, to give your readers a brief *résumé* of the "Passion Play" as I witnessed it, and speak of the *supposed* influence it produced upon the public of San Francisco; for it so happens I was, and still am, what some years ago many "unco guid" people called (and many have not even now cured themselves of indulgence in the little pleasantry (?)) "an actor-woman," although I was not in the cast of the "Passion Play." I was filling an engagement at an opposition theatre in San Francisco at the time, and was given the opportunity of seeing Mr. Morse's Passion Play through the courtesy of the manager of said play, who gave a professional matinee to enable other visiting companies *and* the *clergy* to see the "best-cursed" play of the hour, and I can speak from ocular and auricular demonstration; but maybe I will anon.

L. C.

Vulgar Lout and Vulgar God.

When the Sabbath bells are pealing, and the Sabbath hymns intone
(O, the luckless, luckless heathen with his idols made of stone!)—
When the spirit of the Preacher riseth up on wings of prayer,
And the soul of him who worshippeth is rapt in visions fair,
There's a lump of clay a-kneeling—in the Shrine there bends a clod—
'Tis the Vulgar Lout a-pleading with his Little Vulgar God.

When the pure of heart are yearning to their Priest, the Purified—
When the Lowly beg the Lowly that he purge them of their Pride,
There's a creature making bargains with the Lord who lives on high,
"If I give thee silver shekels, wilt thou pass my trespass by?
Shall I prosper in my selling? Wilt thou aid me with a nod?"
—'Tis the Vulgar Lout a-haggling with his Little Vulgar God!

Never dream hath he of Glories in the Glamor Land to be;
Little maketh he of Mansions by the gleaming Jasper Sea;
For the things of Earth are dearer to his sordid vision far
Than the honey-dews of Aidenn and the light of every star.
So he whispers: "Let me flourish as a fatling on the sod—
I, a Vulgar Lout, am pleading with my Little Vulgar God!"

For in sooth the Lord who liveth, He will hearken to the call
(O! He marks the Stocks a-rising as he sees the sparrows fall!)
He is potent to reward us if we come with willing feet,
And the cash upon his altars sendeth up a savor sweet!
And to them who spare not incense He is sparing with His rod,
And the Vulgar Lout is pleasing to the Little Vulgar God!

Yes—we make Him in our image—yonder God we all adore;
He is even just as we are, if we read his record o'er;
He's a slayer red with slaughter to the sullen brood of Cain.
To the pedlar He's a pedlar with a mighty greed of grain;
He's a huge eternal schemer to the tribe who plan and plod—
To the Vulgar Lout and puny He's a Little Vulgar God!

—*Sydney Bulletin.*

P. L.

Obituary.

A tablet has just been erected at the Woking Crematorium in memory of the late Mrs. Ann Seal, of Brighton, who died in December last at the age of seventy-six. Deceased was a great admirer—like her husband, the late Mr. Samuel Seal—of Thomas Paine and his writings. She was a convinced and steadfast Freethinker; her remains were cremated, and no service of any kind was held, by her desire. Mrs. Seal was the daughter of a Middlesex magistrate. She was one of nature's elect in body and mind, and many still living have reason to remember her kindness and consideration. She might have lived longer if she had not spent herself so freely in the service of others.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

Open-air Propaganda.

Station-road (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.
Brockwell Park: 3.15, A lecture; 6.30, A lecture.
Peckham Rye: 3.15, E. Pack.
Kingsland (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.
Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, F. A. Davies.
Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
Kilburn (Glengall-road): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.
Hammersmith (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, E. Pack.
Finsbury Park: 3.30, F. A. Davies.
Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen; 6.15, A. White.
Mile End Waste: 11.30, A lecture; 7.15, W. J. Ramsey. August 8, at 8.15, E. White.
Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. Cohen.
West Ham Branch (Stratford Grove): 7.30, S. E. Easton.
Battersea Park Gates: 11.30, A lecture.

COUNTRY.

Birmingham Branch (in the Bull Ring): 11, H. Percy Ward, "Has Man a Soul?" Mr. Percy Ward will also lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8—weather permitting.

Chatham Secular Society (Queen's-road, New Brompton): Closed during the months of July and August.

Liverpool: Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. Closed until September 2. Outdoor lectures at the Monument, bottom of London-road, on August 12, 19, and 26, at 7 p.m.; and on September 2, at 3 p.m.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—August 5, m., Kingsland.

Arthur B. Moss, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—August 26, m., Mile End.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—August 5, Birmingham; 12, Failsworth; 19, Northampton; 26, Birmingham.

F. A. Davies, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—August 5, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 12, m., Hyde Park; a., Victoria Park; e., Kilburn. 19, m., Battersea; e., Hammersmith. 26, a. and e., Brockwell Park. September 2, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 9, Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

PECULIAR PEOPLE.

An Open Letter to Mr. Justice Wills

On his sentencing Thomas George Senior to Four Months' Imprisonment with Hard Labor for Obeying the Bible by not calling in a Doctor to his Sick Child.

By G. W. FOOTE.

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[*Continued on p. 495. Look There!*]

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 32. SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

Sabbatarian Cant.

To see a Christian minister solicitous for the success of social reforms would be a pleasing sight were it not that experience has taught us to look for some ulterior motive at work. One can generally rest assured that it is not the proposed reform that bulks largest in his mind, but the business uses to which it may be turned. This is only the normal outcome of professional interest. One cannot say too often that the churches and chapels of this country are trading corporations and little else, and that its accredited agents will view everything from the standpoint of their order rather than from that of the community at large. In one sense this is inevitable. Place any body of men in a similar position, let them feel that their whole social status is bound up with the perpetuation of certain institutions, customs, or beliefs, and, although one may find instances to the contrary, yet let anything threaten the interests of their class, and at once a closed front is presented to all reform.

This feature is brought out very clearly in the question of Sunday observance. Practically, the only question upon which all the churches and chapels have been united during recent years has been that of resisting the publication of Sunday papers. For once the hatchet of internecine warfare was buried. The danger threatened all alike, and the union of church and chapel was singularly successful in defeating the common enemy of all. The sanctity of Sunday was at stake, and its destruction meant the disappearance of one of the instruments by means of which the religious feelings are kept alive, now that the intellectual conditions that gave them birth are rapidly dying out.

There was a time when the clergy based their opposition to the secularisation of Sunday on the plain, honest grounds that it was contrary to the Christian religion. Indeed, the first legislative act concerning Sunday amusements that I am acquainted with dates from the time of Constantine, and then the clergy were honest enough to raise as their principal objection the plea that they kept people away from church. This was the ground upon which legislation was first resorted to; and, in spite of various excuses, it remains the ground reason for the activity of the Churches now. Only they are not honest enough to say so. Instead, we are assured that they are all concerned lest the workman should be robbed of his day of rest. Hypocrisy is added to cupidity, and the religious parties, finding that the old cry, "Desecration of the Sabbath," fails to appeal to modern minds, change their tactics, and seek to gain their end by the profession of a belated regard for the welfare of the working man.

I have written the above *apropos* of reading a sermon by the Rev. R. F. Horton on "Sunday Observance." Mr. Horton is a gentleman who, while fully comprehending the interests of his profession, and able to see that the Sabbatarian pill needs some sort of a social coating if it is to be swallowed, is yet not quite smart enough to disguise the real object he has in view. He informs us, to begin with, that his plea for a day of rest is based primarily upon an economic necessity. "The only way of getting good work out of human beings is by keeping the human beings, not only healthy, but happy—happy and buoyant with all the freshness of their manhood and womanhood upon them." Consequently, "on purely utilitarian grounds," Government should "prohibit trading; it should prohibit even travelling; it should prohibit the publication of newspapers one day in the week; because upon that turns the health and well-being of the community."

As so much is to be prohibited, one wonders why the ringing of church bells, the opening and closing of churches, the preaching of sermons, and the taking up of collections is not also placed on the proscribed list. All of these things involve labor, and, if it is argued that the labor is for the benefit of others, the same plea might also be urged on behalf of other forms of work, and with much greater justice. For it is plain that, for obvious reasons, Mr. Horton confuses the issue between *a* day of rest and *the* day of rest. That a day of rest is necessary for all no Secularist questions for a moment. Secularism would extend rather than limit our opportunities in that direction. But it is downright stupidity or knavery to confuse inactivity with rest. Rest, real beneficial rest, is not inactivity, but change of occupation. The rest for a student is to ride, walk, row, or indulge in some form of physical exercise. And the rest for a man whose daily occupation involves physical labor is to take up those occupations the student lays down with a sigh of relief. It is not rest to sit "doin' o' nothink"; it is the most demoralising of occupations. And what the clergy will not see—I have given up saying they cannot see—is that, if one section of the community is to enjoy a real day of rest, the labor of another section is indispensable. Insist upon each section having a rest by all means; but for all to cease labor at the same moment and resume labor at the same moment is to empty our leisure time of all the good it may contain.

But, of course, Mr. Horton does not mean that *all* labor should cease on the Sunday, but only such labor as is not connected with church or chapel. And this religious use of Sunday, in spite of all that has been said concerning the economic necessity of the day, "is much the more important." He quotes Isaiah as to the penalties that will follow our ignoring the Sabbath, calmly ignoring the fact that the threat applies to the Saturday and not to the Sunday, and then, with unconscious sarcasm, asserts that the distinctive feature of the Christian Sabbath is that it requires you to do something that is unpleasant. "Men say frequently to-day that they find they can worship better in their own homes, and still more in the open country.....Now, the danger I see in that position is that, by the very necessity of the case, it violates the first requirement of the Sabbath.....You stay at home in your own house, or you go out into the country on Sunday. In doing that you are going your own way, you are seeking your own pleasure—that is to say, you are violating the very principle upon which the Sabbath rests."

If this means anything at all, it means that the only legitimate manner of spending Sunday is to be miserable. You must not go into the country, the seaside, to a museum or art gallery or library; you may not even spend Sunday at home with your family, because you may find pleasure in all these things. The only proper way of spending Sunday, according to Mr. Horton, is to come to church; "one of the great reasons

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for coming to church," says this preacher of the pleasures of sorrow, "is that you do not like it." Mr. Horton evidently has a fellow feeling with the clergyman who, speaking at a P. S. A. conference, denounced the whole movement, and wound up with a fervent "Thank God, there has never been a pleasant Sunday afternoon in my church."

But Mr. Horton has another reason why people should attend church on Sundays. With the mournful air of a speculator lamenting a fall in stock, he plaintively complains that "the worship in God's house is becoming rarer even amongst good people, and is not even thought of by the great bulk of the community." This has happened because people have fallen into the pernicious habit of believing that they could get on without the parson. "Many persons have honestly stayed at home from service this morning thinking they will worship God in their rooms. I undertake to say that ninetenths of them are asleep at the present moment, and that the others are not worshipping; they have forgotten it." In this instance I should be inclined to agree with the preacher, and should also be inclined to agree with his statement that, if you "take one hundred people who have kept away from the house of worship for six months, and ask them to tell you candidly whether they have not lost the sense of the divine presence in worship, whether they have not lost the aspiration after heavenly things," you would find the answer to be in the affirmative. I agree with this, and it is conclusive proof that all the talk one hears concerning the innate craving of human nature after God and religious worship is so much empty twaddle. It is the force of social example that keeps the religious feelings alive, not the religious feelings that hasten social development. Mr. Horton is only saying, in a roundabout manner, that, left to themselves, the whole circle of religious ideas would gradually disappear.

But here, at all events, is the real reason for Mr. Horton's anxiety that the day of rest may be preserved. It is not that the men and women who spend the week cooped up in unhealthy factories, engaged in monotonous labor, breathing poisonous air, may escape for a few hours into the fields, on the river, or to the seaside; not that those whose time is fully taken up struggling to earn a living may spend a few hours in enjoyment of the treasures contained in the museums, art galleries, and libraries that they are taxed to support. All these things may give them pleasure, and, therefore, amount to a desecration of the day of rest. No; his anxiety is that they shall come to church, and, as they are not likely to come to church if there are opportunities for them going elsewhere, therefore Government must be called upon to close all other places, prohibit all means of recreation, until, from sheer weariness and lack of anywhere else to go, people will go to the only man who is allowed to do business on the "Sabbath."

But Mr. Horton assures us that he does not want Government to regulate Sunday labor on religious, but on political, grounds. "I would say that we want no State interference to preserve the Lord's Day; on the contrary, we wish the State to kindly keep its hands off the whole question." The delicious hypocrisy of it all! For what other reason than to preserve the "Lord's Day" do Mr. Horton and others fight against the opening of museums on Sunday? Is there more labor involved in opening the National Gallery on Sunday than in opening Lyndhurst-road Chapel? For what reason does the *Methodist Times* rejoice that "a dangerous proposal," such as opening the park gymnasiums on Sunday, was defeated, or the Bishop of Carlisle lament that the number of people leaving Paddington Station on Sunday to go "up the river" is enough to "make angels weep"? Of all the cant connected with the advocacy of religion this of the clergy concerning Sunday is the most detestable. To find a body of men willing to prohibit the healthful recreation of boys on Sunday, to shut people off from the life-giving sea or country air, or from the intellectual enjoyment of our national institutions, and all in the interests of a class or of a senseless creed, is enough to make one despair of human nature. There are many mean ways of getting a living, but amongst them that of a clergyman must surely occupy a prominent position.

C. Cohen.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

My absence from London, and the postal delay consequent on Bank Holiday, which caused my letters to reach me too late to be dealt with in this week's *Freethinker*, prevent me doing justice at present to the subject of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. But I shall have ample opportunity to deal with it more effectually next week.

First of all, let me call the attention of Freethinkers to an account in the *Methodist Times* of how the thousands rolled in at a recent Conference for the Wesleyan Twentieth Century Fund. One donor who had already given 7,000 guineas stood up and, "in most modest and affecting terms," offered to give 20,000 guineas more, and "the neck of the difficulty"—meaning, we suppose, the completion of the projected million pounds—was broken. Then came Messrs. Henry and Thomas Holloway, who had already given "700 guineas out of income," and were "moved by the Holy Spirit" to give "5,000 guineas more out of capital." Two other donors gave an additional 5,000 guineas. This was followed by two additional gifts of 1,000 guineas each from other donors. And so the race continued.

Now, we are quite aware that Freethinkers have not as many wealthy men amongst them as the Wesleyan Methodists, and we cannot expect gifts of thousands of guineas. But there are some Freethinkers who might, by a special effort, do something fairly handsome for their own Twentieth Century Fund. It must also be pointed out that the great Wesleyan Methodist Fund has not depended altogether upon the rich or even the well-to-do. It has been subscribed to by the general body of members in every circuit throughout the kingdom. And the Freethought Fund should be subscribed to in the same manner. Unfortunately (in one way) we cannot appeal to *all* the motives by which Christian subscribers are animated. We cannot appeal to the hope of heaven or the fear of hell. We cannot promise that those who give will be considered to have lent to the Lord, and will be certain to receive their own back (somehow) with liberal interest. We cannot appeal to vanity and the desire of cheap reputation. No one will gain in any way, here or hereafter, by giving to the Freethought Fund. The appearance of his name in the list will do him no particular good in business. It will not make his way easier in the world. It might conceivably make his way somewhat harder. No, all the motives we can appeal to are purely disinterested. Those who give can only give for the sheer love of Freethought. The only advantage they will ever derive is the satisfaction of knowing that the battle of reason against faith, of science against superstition, of fact against fable, of solid human welfare in this world against supposititious human welfare in another world, is being waged more vigorously, more consistently, and more effectually. And, after all, it is only the higher natures that can be moved very deeply by such considerations.

One reader of the *Freethinker*, whose generosity has often been of assistance to the cause in past years, has sent me a most encouraging letter. Its contents are mainly "private," but I am free to say that he regards this Fund as "a happy thought," and that he is prepared to contribute to it the sum of £200. He wishes his contribution to appear in print as follows:—"John Downing. 'Liberty' as unfolded in Milton's *Areopagitica*." That is how it will be printed in the list of acknowledgments. And it is really a most excellent celebration of perhaps the very sublimest treatise ever penned in favor of liberty of thought, conscience, and speech. For my own part, I am delighted to see the glorious name of Milton coupled with this handsome donation. And it would be no less delightful to see the name of Shakespeare coupled with another donation no less generous. For if Milton was, as Shelley said, a bold reformer, Shakespeare was, beyond any reasonable doubt, a thorough Freethinker.

I have asked this practical admirer of Milton's magnificent plea for liberty to let me give further extracts from his letter. But his reply has not had

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time to reach me as I write. Perhaps I may be able to give them next week.

Mr. George Anderson, writing on this Twentieth Century Fund, says:—

> "If the above be put to the purchasing or building of a Secular Hall in a populous part of London, I will subscribe £10 to every £100 subscribed up to £8,000; or, if only for the leasing of a Hall, a smaller percentage according to the term of the lease. Probably other gentlemen will do similarly. I wish to see a place where the youth of both sexes will be taught secular science, without their young minds being dosed with superstitious dogma."

If I were to make a suggestion to Mr. Anderson it would be that he should give *something* to this Fund in any case, and let his honored name appear in the list. No one is more sensible than I am of the necessity for such an institution as he indicates in London. We want good headquarters for our movement in the metropolis, and I have more than once hinted that if I live, and keep my health and strength, I intend to tackle that great enterprise. But it does not seem possible just at present to say precisely what will be done with this Fund. So much depends upon the amount realised. And if we cannot do all that we desire, that is no reason why we should not do what can be done. The disposition of the Fund, as already stated, lies in the hands of two thoroughly representative bodies—the Executive of the National Secular Society and the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited. Moreover, it would be easy, as it would be useful, to take the opinion of subscribers on the matter.

I must now leave the subject until next week, when I daresay I shall have a good list of promises to acknowledge. Meanwhile I beg all who mean to contribute to this Fund to communicate with me at their earliest convenience.

G. W. FOOTE.

What is a Miracle?

IN my recent article, under the heading "Christian Miracles a Delusion," I pointed out the utter fallacy of supposing that the miraculous incidents recorded in the New Testament proved Christianity to be "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." I now purpose showing how difficult it is to understand what a so-called miracle really is. To my mind, the inability that obtains to perceive what constitutes a "miracle" is in itself a damaging argument against its evidential value. Judging from a human standpoint, a God who was all good would not perform his greatest and, from his point of view, most important works by means so different from those he usually employed that his children would be compelled to reject them as not being of any special import. Besides, it is only reasonable to suppose that if God is what Christians assert him to be, he would have arranged that the evidence for the truth of his "unique scheme for human regeneration" should have been so clear that honest scepticism towards it would be impossible. But it is not so. Even at the time and place where and when Christ is said to have performed his miracles, many of the people were not convinced of their genuineness. (See Matt. xiii. 58; John xii. 37.) And in almost every succeeding age many of the greatest intellects have rejected the miraculous features of Christianity. At the present day not only do some of the great thinkers outside the Church avow their disbelief in miracles, but many of the more intelligent professors of Christianity do the same.

It is a significant fact that those who still cling to the belief in the miraculous portions of Christianity entertain very confused notions of what a miracle is. In fact, this perplexity has always obtained amongst Christian exponents, as will be seen from the following various answers given to the question, "What constitutes a miracle?" Priaulx says: "By a miracle I mean, first, an extraordinary fact brought about by insufficient means. Secondly, a natural event supernaturally produced." Here the fallacy must be at once apparent, for the obvious reason that the means must be sufficient to produce the event, or it would not take place. If it is meant that the *natural* means were insufficient, then it may be asked, What knowledge have we of anything besides the natural? Is it reasonable to ascribe an effect to something of which we know nothing? Moreover, even if we admit the existence of a supernatural power, are we logically justified in attributing anything to that power until we know where the natural ends and the alleged supernatural begins? Because we are not able to explain the why and the wherefore of certain events is no adequate reason for saying that they were supernaturally originated. Many extraordinary circumstances which occur to-day would doubtless have been regarded by our forefathers as being caused by a supernatural power. We now know that a man, apparently drowned, may be resuscitated; a man who is dumb may be enabled to articulate; a man who is blind may have his sight restored; but who would assert that nature is incapable of achieving such results? Until we know all that nature can do, let us not presume to say what it cannot do.

According to Dr. Wardlaw, a miracle is "doing those works which no man can do, except God be with him." The question here arises, How are we to know when God is with any particular person? If God's presence is necessary to the performance of wonderful works, then, according to the Bible, he at times kept very questionable company. If, on the other hand, extraordinary events can take place without the co-operation of God, the Doctor's definition of a miracle falls to the ground. Besides, it should be remembered that superhuman power is not necessarily "divine" power. All forces in nature that are more potent than those possessed by man are superhuman; but they are not, therefore, supernatural. How, then, are we to recognise the one from the other? The Bible informs us that some miracles were performed through an agency which was antagonistic to God. Dean Alford writes: "Miracles, *as such*, are *no test of truth*, but have been permitted to, and prophesied of, false religions and teachers." Keil observes: "Working lying wonders after the working of Satan cannot be absolutely denied." And Haley admits: "As to Deuteronomy xiii., we have seen that the miracle *per se*, apart from the message, is not conclusive proof of the divine mission of the thaumaturgist. .....Hence the 'miracle' would, in such case, be simply the work of Satan."

Dr. Wardlaw also defines a miracle to be "a temporary suspension of the known laws of nature." If this be true, it proves one of two things: either that God arranged that temporary suspension of the laws of nature, in which case God's laws are not fixed and immutable; or that the suspension was a subsequent arrangement upon the part of God; which would reduce his wisdom or his omnipotence. In the words of Voltaire:—

> "For what purpose would God perform a miracle? To accomplish some particular designs upon living beings? He would then in reality be supposed to say:—I have not been able to effect by my construction of the universe, by my divine decrees, by my eternal laws, a particular object; I am now going to change my eternal ideas and immutable laws; to endeavor to accomplish what I have not been able to do by means of them. This would be an avowal of his weakness, not of his power; it would appear in such a being an inconceivable contradiction."

Dr. Thomas Brown asserts: "A miracle is *not* a violation of any law of nature. It involves, therefore, primarily, no contradiction nor physical absurdity." Noticing this argument, J. S. Mill writes:—

> If it "means that a miracle may be the fulfilment of a law in the same sense in which the ordinary events of nature are fulfilments of laws, it seems to indicate an imperfect conception of what is meant by a law, and of what constitutes a miracle.....To make it [an event] a miracle it must be produced by a direct volition, without the use of means; or, at least, of any means which, if simply repeated, would produce it. To constitute a miracle a phenomenon must take place without having been preceded by any antecedent phenomenal conditions sufficient again to reproduce it; or a phenomenon for the production of which the antecedent conditions existed must be arrested or prevented without the intervention of any phenomenal antecedents which would arrest or prevent it in a future case. The test of a miracle is: Were there present in the case such external conditions, such second causes we may call them, that whenever these conditions or causes re-appear the event will be

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reproduced? If there were, it is not a miracle; if there were not, it is a miracle, but it is not according to law." (Essay on *Theism*, pp. 224-5.)

Bishop Butler urges "that it might be part of the original plan of things that there should be miraculous interposition." If so, the marvels related of Christ were not in opposition to, but in accordance with, those laws of nature which formed a "part of the original plan," and was, therefore, no special interference on the part of Divinity. It was the opinion of Archbishop Tillotson that "It is not the essence of a miracle that it be an immediate effect of the Divine power; it is sufficient that it exceeds any natural power that we know of to produce it." If this were so, it would deprive miracles entirely of any supernatural force, inasmuch as it places their productive power in nature. Hence the more knowledge we have of nature the less reason will there be for professed faith in the supposed supernatural. The theory of the Churches is that a miracle involves a special act upon the part of God, and his interference with natural sequences. The objection to this theory is, that if God be what Christians say he is, all his acts must be for the general good. If, therefore, it were wise for him to perform particular acts two thousand years ago, it would have been also wise for him to have done so before that time. So long, therefore, as he abstained from performing those acts, so long did he withhold supposed advantages from the world. To urge that an act of God's may be good and necessary at one time, and not at another, is to reduce the government of God to a level with that of man, and to admit that the "divine" economy is neither uniform nor perfect.

The orthodox notion of miracles is that they are "violations of the ordinary course of nature." But would not such violations be contrary to the experience of the general operation of nature, whose forces, so far as we have discovered them, are regular in their order? As a believer in the "stability of natural law," I attach no credence to any of the so-called miracles, as they would be opposed to the laws—sequences—of cause and effect. As we can only know of nature as it is, we judge accordingly of its order and capabilities. We know that heat at certain degrees will burn, that water will drown, and that poison in given quantities will destroy life; and to believe otherwise is to ignore facts and reason, and to revel in fancy and credulity. Charles Watts.

Religion and Evolution.

It is sometimes an interesting task to compare and contrast the views of prominent Christian teachers. In a recent number of the *Christian Herald* was printed a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Talmage on "Divine Evolution," and it is quite amusing to compare the statements of the American divine on this subject with those of the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett in his lectures. For example, Mr. Lidgett declared that "evolution was the greatest discovery of the present century." Dr. Talmage, on the other hand, says "that it is a heathenism thousands of years old." The Rev. Scott Lidgett says it does not interfere with his belief in God; that, as a matter of fact, it gives him a higher and nobler conception. Dr. Talmage says "that evolution is not only infidel and atheistic and absurd, but it is brutalising in its tendencies." The Rev. Scott Lidgett says that with regard to man and the ape being derived from a common ancestor, from which the existing anthropoid (man-like) ape as well as man have diverged, "there is abundant and well nigh irresistible evidence." Dr. Talmage declares that there is no evidence at all, and says, further, that "between the physical construction of the highest animal and the physical construction of the lowest man there is a chasm as wide as the Atlantic Ocean." Indeed, a more complete antagonism of opinion between two prominent Christian teachers could not well be imagined. And yet, in regard to his acceptation of the doctrine of evolution, I have no doubt that the Rev J. Scott Lidgett is right. He at least, with his knowledge, cannot resist the overwhelming force of facts, and he is honest and courageous enough to say so. Dr. Talmage, on the other hand, is in a primitive condition of ignorance in regard to the teachings of modern science, and refuses to listen to anything which is opposed to the preconceived opinions of a lifetime. Yet in one thing we assuredly agree with Dr. Talmage. The doctrine of evolution is unquestionably opposed to the teachings of the Bible. Genesis undoubtedly says that "God created man in his own image," and the passage in no way suggests that God first made a protoplasmic germ—a monera—from which developed an organism called Amœbæ, consisting of a simple, naked cell; that this, in the third stage, developed into Synamœbæ, or colonies of Amœbæ, which developed by stages until, in the ninth stage, it reached what is called "Acrania"—vertebrata destitute of head, skull and brain, central heart, jaws, limbs allied to the lancelet or amphioxus of to-day; that it then developed into primitive fishes, then reptiles, then mammals, then men-apes or anthropoida, then to ape-men or commencing-men (*Atali*), allied to the lowest human races of the present time—Papuans, Hottentots, etc.—and last to man, with human speech and simultaneous advance in human evolution connected therewith. (See Haeckel's *Pedigree of Man*, pp. 79, 80.)

The Bible says that "God formed man out of the dust of the earth," and women out of a rib taken from man. Now, science is dead against this rib story. Moreover, it is one of the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith that God placed Adam and Eve in a garden and forbade them to eat of a particular fruit, and said that in the day they ate thereof they would surely die; that under the temptation of a talking serpent they did eat of the fruit, and this disobedience brought about their condemnation. It is also part of the Christian faith that on account of Adam's sin the whole human race is liable to damnation. Well, we now know that this story is not true. At most it is only allegorical. But if the first Adam did not fall in the Garden of Eden, what becomes of the necessity of the Atonement?

The doctrine of evolution gives no warrant for either story. It is as much opposed to the story of Genesis as it is to the story of the Gospels. Moreover, if evolution teaches that the universe in all its parts "is the result of a gradual, orderly, self-continuing, and natural evolution or development," it is certainly opposed to all miracles, whether they take the form of God making man out of the dust of the earth, or of the alleged miraculous birth of Jesus, or, indeed, of any sort or kind of miracle whatever. Dr. Talmage instinctively grasps this truth, and affirms that all the evolutionists, scientists, and philosophers were pronounced "infidels," which is the American divine's offensive way of describing all persons who do not agree with him. Even Dr. Talmage, by this time, ought to know that he is himself an "infidel" to all the religions in the world, except his own.

This much it has been necessary to say by way of clearing the path for consideration of the third lecture of the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett on "Religion and Evolution."

In defining what he means by "religion," Mr. Lidgett sums up by affirming that "practically, then, religion covers the whole field of what is meant by men knowing, conceiving, worshipping, loving, and obeying God." In other words, religion is Theism. But there are various sorts of Theism. Voltaire was a firm believer in God; so also was Thomas Paine; yet both of them discarded the Bible as a revelation from Deity, and pronounced it to be a human production, full of absurdities, atrocities, and immoralities, and not the kind of book to be placed in the hands of children.

Would the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett regard Voltaire and Thomas Paine as religious men? If not, why not? He cannot deny that they were firm believers in Deity, and that both of them wrote books in which they endeavored to prove the existence of the God they worshipped. According to Professor Rhys Davids, Buddhism is a purely atheistic religion. Yet it has nearly 400 millions of adherents. If the definition of religion given by the Rev. Scott Lidgett be true, all these millions of Buddhists are without religious belief. Further on, however, Mr. Lidgett broadens his definition of religion to include everybody, for he says that "religion has been to such an extent a mark of humanity that for practical purposes we may assume that where man is, there is religion." There we agree with him,

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for religion, after all, at bottom, is a purely human production, and, in its best sense, means the earnest striving of the individual after righteousness. "All the world is my country, mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion," are the noble words of Thomas Paine, and we know of no better description of what religion should be than that. But Mr. Lidgett knows perfectly well that religion has not always meant this. In the past it has meant belief in gods and devils, in ghosts and angels, in witchcraft and slavery, in miracles and prayers, in heaven and hell; and while these beliefs have prevailed men have often lost sight of morality, of those grand principles which promote human well-being and ennoble and glorify the human race. The history of most religions has, unhappily, been a history of ignorant superstition and cruel persecution. The dreadful religious wars that in various ages have deluged the earth in blood have done much to bring all religion into disgrace and hatred. From the third down to the sixteenth century Christians were constantly waging war, and some of the most fearful crimes were perpetrated in the name of the Christian religion. Colonel Ingersoll well said:—

> "The people also found that commerce made friends where religion made enemies, and that religious zeal was utterly incompatible with peace between nations or individuals. They discovered that those who loved the gods most were apt to love men least; that the arrogance of universal forgiveness was amazing; that the most malicious had the effrontery to pray for their enemies; and that humility and tyranny were the fruit of the same tree." (*Oration on the Gods*, page 37.)

In the first century after the alleged death of Jesus the conduct of the Christians was at its best; they behaved with commendable heroism and self-restraint; but as soon as Christianity got power, and began to spread throughout the Roman empire, it commenced to display a tyrannical and persecuting spirit, which grew and grew until it culminated in what are now known as "the Dark Ages of Christianity"—one of the saddest and most terrible pages in the history of the world. It is sometimes said that the base and brutal men of these ages—the men who inspired all kinds of cruelty, who deluged the earth with human blood, who enslaved the minds and bodies of millions—that these men could not have been Christians.

But during the early centuries of the Christian Church the persecutors were representative men. They were the men in authority; and if it is said that they were not Christians, the obvious retort is, Where were the Christians during these ages? It is quite clear that belief in God and the Bible did not restrain them from committing some very horrible crimes. Mosheim, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, has drawn up a fearful indictment against the conduct of Christians in the early ages. It is true that there has been an evolutionary process going on, not only in regard to the teachings of Christianity, but in respect also of its morality, and its progress has been largely accelerated by the introduction of science and other civilising influences that have grown up side by side with it.

With a good deal of the Rev. Scott Lidgett's statement of the evolution of religious beliefs we entirely agree. But when he says, "It is when we grasp the meaning and application of the new law of evolution that the Bible is satisfactorily explained," we say, in reply, that we agree if the Bible is regarded as a human production, but not otherwise. If the Bible was an inspired book, a book that came straight from God, we have to ask the question, Was God ever in favor of slavery, or polygamy, or aggressive warfare, and has he changed his opinions with the growth of human opinion on these subjects? Mr. Lidgett says that most of the moral difficulties of the Old Testament are explained at once when we remember that the religion of each age is the best of which that age is capable. Does he mean that a good God sends an inspired book to teach savage races how to act as savages, and civilised peoples how to act up to the measure of their capacity? In other words, that God is never in advance, not even in one single idea, of the various peoples who believe in and worship him.

In the purely natural sense—the humanitarian sense—we admit that religion is subject to the same law of evolution as all other things in this world of change. Religions are born; they have their childhood, they grow to maturity, and ultimately they decay, new religions taking their place. After all, Rationalists are as anxious as other people that all that is good in religion shall be preserved. No sensible man wishes to destroy anything that is good wherever it is found. Our great desire should be to hasten the happy day when men's minds shall be free from superstition, when they shall be able to think out the great problems of the universe without fear and without prejudice, desiring one thing above all—viz., to learn the truth, and uphold in it the interests, not only of themselves, but of generations yet unborn.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Public Libraries and Secular Works.

IT is futile for us to deny that religionists do not seize every possible opportunity to place before the people, and especially those who are most inclined to doubt by reason of the cruel, agonising conditions under which they exist, the rosy, attractive sides of the various creeds. To teach the doctrine of Christ fair and square, without any allurements or menaces, is generally admitted by those who know, to be absurd and useless, if to gain converts is your aim. No matter in what form it is put, what tales are sprung, or whether you miss the fundamental points by having a glowing picture painted, giving the so-called necessary issues in any easily digestible manner, and leaving the hard matter-of-fact realities in the background, the ministers of religion to-day are happy if they have secured followers by such detestable methods.

To equalise these condemnable practices, Secularists must be on the alert to utilise every available agency for the spreading of their principles and aims. Our cause, by its justness and truthfulness, needs no underhand tactics for its propagators to adopt. Without any fear of the results, we can gain adherents by placing our contentions openly before all listeners; but it is essential to seize all possibilities of promulgating our claims, to make progress, and keep our system before the people. There is no better instrument for this purpose than the public library, but I am sorry to say Secularists do not seem to recognise fully this grand opportunity. The apathy we display in this matter is really inexcusable, and it behoves those who perceive its importance to rally together, and let themselves be felt by the authorities responsible for the municipal libraries. No branch of our work is so powerful for the spreading of our principles as a systematic circulation of our literature; why, then, remain so inactive as we now are in this direction? In the districts where public libraries are a reality, Secularists have only to band together and cause an outcry by holding meetings, writing letters to the press, etc. It can be taken for granted that where a parish is enlightened enough to have a public library, there will be some in charge of that building who will not turn a deaf ear to appeals made in a proper fashion, by men who are evidently conscientious and have the interests of the people at heart.

The pioneers of any good movement always deserve the most praise, because more courage and perseverance are requisite at its commencement, when so many enemies have to be opposed, than after it has grown and lived down the odium dishonestly heaped against it by vested interests and others. It is foolish to imagine that one or two men can work a change in the public libraries. In combination lies our strength. It stands to reason that a publicly-elected body will not favor Secularists when they rise up singly in parishes, demanding works in a municipal library which many of the inhabitants of that division strenuously object to. From personal experience, however, I am rather inclined to believe that effort with unity is all that is required on our part to secure the adoption of Freethought works in public libraries.

H. MARCUS WRIGHT.

Confucianism and Christianity.

In a letter to the *New York Journal*, the Chinese Minister to the United States, Wu Ling Fang, seems to praise Jesus for going "a little further" than Confucius in the matter of "loving one's enemies"; he really leaves it open to be inferred that Confucius stopped at the right point and Jesus went beyond it. With regard to the persecutions in Christian history, he says that they fill him with horror. "We have no such records," he observes, "in China." Jews, Mohammedans, and Buddhists have lived there peaceably side by side. "It is only," he adds, "when indiscreet Christian missionaries go to extremes and excite the people that they ever have any trouble." He concludes by scoring neatly for Confucianism. Confucius did not teach the doctrine of a future life. He said he did not know what was going to take place to-morrow, and how could he know anything about a more remote future? Besides, it was men's duty to do their best to-day, with no thought of reward. "That," says the Chinese Minister, "seems to me the higher view."

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Acid Drops.

Emperor William has been preaching another sermon, likening the Chinese to the Amalekites, and urging the Christian Germans to be at them in the name of the Lord. No doubt the Emperor fancies the new Amalekites will fall as easily and universally as the old ones, but we think he is mistaken. By the way, does he want the fate of King Agag to be meted out to the Dowager Empress? It would be a great sight to see Emperor William "hewing her in pieces before the Lord."

It was a curious freak of anarchism to attempt the assassination of the poor Shah. One would think, if he had to be murdered, the job might be left to his own disaffected subjects. But your modern Anarchist who believes in "deeds"—that is, in killing somebody, and preferably somebody of distinction—has no country. He assumes to represent the human race, and to deal out summary justice "on his own." He is like the Catholic Church in this, that he claims infallibility. It does not occur to him that he can ever be mistaken.

It is useless, however, to spend a lot of time in denouncing these "deed" Anarchists. What civilised nations have to do—what they *must* do—is to cleanse the city pollutions in which these abnormal beings are bred. Just as, in the physical sphere, the permitted filth which breeds fever by-and-bye slays beyond the area of its immediate ravage, so, in the moral sphere, the wretched conditions of life which are permitted to exist are the cause of disaster to other persons than those immediately affected.

There is another way in which violent Anarchism is bred. The inhumanity of Governments produces a corresponding inhumanity in political and social rebels. Most of these violent Anarchists are Italians. Well now, the Italian prisons are among the worst in the world, and ferocious sentences are dealt out to offenders who are not ordinary criminals. During the year 1897 no less than 124 persons were condemned to solitary confinement for life. Think of what that means! Killing the *man* by slow torture and starvation of his faculties, and leaving only the *animal* to survive. Why, hanging or guillotining is nothing to this. A quick pull of the rope, a quick descent of the great knife, and all is over. How much more humane it is than crushing out a prisoner's manhood day after day, until all that is left of him is a wretched *thing*.

This is how they sneer at the missionaries in China. And no wonder! One evening an English missionary in Peking took a friend who was visiting him to a regular Chinese theatre. It happened that the play for that evening was a burlesque on foreign preaching. A Chinaman, dressed up to represent a foreigner, came upon the stage with his arms full of books, attended by his Chinese servant. He began to preach a mock sermon, making the mistakes in speaking which a foreigner is likely to make. These mistakes were received with bursts of laughter from the audience, to whom the books were distributed. The fun came to a climax when the make-believe preacher, after delivering a sentence particularly full of laughable mistakes, turned to his servant and said: "How did I speak? Did I do pretty well?" and the servant replied with great gravity: "The foreign teacher, indeed, speaks the Chinese language exceedingly well. No mistakes at all were made by him."

The Emperor of China may, at any rate, be credited with a desire to know what the Christian religion is like. It is stated that when the ladies, both Chinese and foreign, presented the Empress Dowager with a magnificent copy of the New Testament, it interested the Emperor, to judge from his conduct, more than it did the Dowager herself. The day after the present reached the Palace an order came to the Bible Society in Peking which attracted the special attention of the agent of that society. The man who brought the order was an eunuch. He seemed very particular to retain the little slip of paper on which the order was written, and insisted upon its return to him after it had been copied. They then discovered that the order was from the Emperor, and that it was for Bibles—both Old and New Testaments—such as the society was selling to his people.

The Emperor and the Dowager, too, seem to have been so much impressed with the Scriptures that they have readily left all Christians in their territory to the mercy of the "Boxers."

Lord Salisbury's speech on missions seems to have occasioned a great deal of disquietude—especially amongst pious people, who would, if they could, explain it away. The *Church Times* devotes a column and a half to efforts made with the desire to remove the sting of that very important utterance. Someone, whose opinion was solicited, writes that Lord Salisbury's speech has struck him in different ways at different times. When he listened to it, he heard the tones of kindliness to missionaries and reverence for religion. But when he read the speech next morning, it seemed "much abler and less kind." Again, when he heard it quoted in bits, it "roused" him a great deal; and he thinks it is "in this last state—cut up into bits by the unsympathetic—that the speech is really to be regretted."

In the first Christian newspaper published in China there is an "Essay on Heaven" for the instruction of China. It is the missionary's idea of Paradise arranged to tempt the Mongolian; and, indeed, it is very much on a plane with that of the negro, with its "golden stairs" to be ascended in "dem golden slippers." After quoting Revelations, the Christian appeal to the heathen Chinee reads as follows: "All the cities of the world are built of earth, or bricks, or stone, or wood. Has anyone ever heard of a city of silver and gold? Has anyone ever seen a pagoda that was roofed with golden tiles? Anyone who should see such a building would be surprised at its cost. But in the City of Heaven the houses themselves are not only made of gold, but even the roads are paved with it; the houses are roofed with it; the city is full of it. Everything is of the most precious gold." Nevertheless, the chosen consent to linger on in this brick and mortar and wooden world! And when they are hard-pressed with rebellious natives, they do not call in the All-powerful of whom they preach, but rely on soldiers with carnal weapons, and some of whom are not Christians at all. Is not this playing the great Mission rather low?

Christianity, like familiarity, must breed contempt in the heathen mind when its doctrines are expounded in the startling fashion adopted by Wilhelm II. of Germany, says the *Topical Times*. That "Christian" monarch's exhortation to the soldiers leaving for China, "to give no quarter and make no prisoners," is sufficient to characterise him as a raving maniac, quite unfit to govern a civilised people, or as a ruler whose intemperance, violence, and inhuman wrath place him on a level with the most bloodthirsty tyrant of ancient history. To quote his words again, "to give no quarter and make no prisoners," means that women, children, and feeble old men are to be ruthlessly massacred! Truly can this potentate say:—

> The king-becoming graces—
> As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
> Bounty, perseverance, mercy, loveliness,
> Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude—
> I have no relish for them.

Dr. Maurice Busch, in his *Memoirs of Bismarck*, states that the Iron Chancellor, during the Franco-German war, strongly objected to the soldiers taking prisoners: he had a tigerish thirst for blood. Wilhelm II. has shown himself a very apt pupil of Prince Bismarck, even though he did not demonstrate himself a grateful one.

The Kaiser's address to the first contingent of the German brigade starting for China has surpassed, says the *Christian World*, in indiscretion, bad taste, and brutality of expression, all previous oratorical efforts of this impulsive monarch. Out of the multitude of official, semi-official, and private reports of the speech it is difficult to settle on the exact words used. The first private reports rendered the speech probably as it was delivered; the official editors who came afterwards have sought to modify the truculent and barbarous phraseology so as to bring it into harmony with one's ideas of imperial dignity and with the dictates of ordinary humanity.

On Sunday last a certain seaside resort was given over to the usual Sabbath inanity. All the ordinary week-day amusements were stopped, the bathing had to cease at ten o'clock, and thousands of people walked about aimlessly, with absolutely nothing to do except stare at each other, or crack jokes (not always too clean) as they passed, or rush off for drinks when the hour arrived for the public-houses to open. *That* form of competition is the only one the churches and chapels allow on the Lord's Day. Perhaps they think—at any rate, *we* do—that there is a basic relation between the spirit of the parson and the spirit of the publican; and that both these caterers are at bottom very much in the same line of business.

Stop a minute. We were in too great a hurry. There is one other form of competition allowed, if it can be called a competition. We refer to the religious services on the sands. There was a variety of these entertainments. First of all, there was the inevitable Salvation Army. We came upon this group just as the captain was thanking the audience for a collection of 7s. 6½d., and mildly reproaching them for not making it 10s. "for Christ's sake." The principal speaker in the Salvation Army meeting was an unmistakable Englishman dressed in Hindu fashion. He told the meeting that he had been saving native souls in India, and that he and his colleagues got on amazingly well with the inhabitants of the

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village they labored in. Apparently they converted the whole lot. Anyhow, the natives gave the village temple up to them, and they used it for the worship of Christ, after carrying out the Hindu god and goddess "on a stretcher." The Salvation Army called these images as the objects of their worship.

But that only shows his inability to understand their religion. Indeed, it is peculiar how Christians are blind and deaf to the true nature of other religions than their own. The Hindus do not worship images as *gods*, but as *symbols* or *suggestions* of gods. And the thought occurred to us that, if General Booth wants to cast *idols* out of temples, he need not go all the way to India for a sphere of operations. He might go to work at once in the temples of the Roman Catholic Church throughout Christendom. He might even make a beginning with the "High" churches of England. There is quite as much "idolatry" in these temples of Christ as there is in any Hindu temple. Of course, we know what the Roman Catholic would reply. He would say that he did not *worship* the figure of Christ on the cross, or the figure of the Virgin Mary, or the figures of Peter, Paul, Joseph, or any other saint, but merely bowed himself before them as intermediate symbols between himself and God. Well, that is precisely what the Hindu would say of his seeming worship of idols. Altogether, it is pretty evident that General Booth's "stretcher" for temple-images might easily be worn out in this country. Charity may not always begin at home, but reformation does; and India could very well wait until the "god and goddess removal" business is completed in England.

By the way, the Salvation Army band played one or two dance tunes "all for the glory of God," and some profane lads and lasses, who probably found Sunday tedious, began to jig and waltz in a somewhat subdued Sabbatarian manner.

Another religious entertainment on the sands was of a quieter order. The music, led by a harmonium, was soft. And the speeches were rather soft too. It was nearly all of the "dear, dear friends" variety. One speaker, a man with a pleasant, intelligent face—who incidentally trotted out a most venerable chestnut as quite a newcomer on this planet—explained the difficulty he had somewhere abroad in getting the "poor heathen" to understand "redemption" and the "new birth." We believe he was talking sincerely, but we felt that his knowledge was limited. Most of the "heathen" are familiar with the idea of *redemption*—if not by Christ; and what the Christian calls the "new birth" is only his peculiar form of the world-wide idea and practice of "initiation." But you can hardly expect accurate ethnology at a religious meeting on the sands.

A third of these pious entertainments was of a more robustious type. The singing was loud and vigorous, and the speeches were quite aggressive. There was much denunciation of *sin*, which was invariably treated as synonymous with drinking. Not one of the soul-savers remembered (or mentioned) that Jesus Christ had a good share of that "sin," and sometimes helped others to a good share of it too. More than one of them dwelt on the truth that Christianity is good business; or, as the Bible puts it, that godliness is great gain. A very energetic, vulgar man, who was introduced as the "happy shoemaker," though he didn't *look* happy, told the meeting that people often wondered how it was they couldn't get on. "Look at me!" he cried, "I found the Lord first, and I found money afterwards. That's the way. You try it." Such is "spiritual" piety at a seaside revival meeting!

One of the speakers at that third meeting took the name of the editor of the *Freethinker* in vain. We did not hear it, for it was before our arrival, but we were informed of it by a friend. The speaker was a bit of a bounder, with a large display of shirt cuff. Gazing round on the assembly, he said that he did not know whether Mr. G. W. Foote was present or not (it was doubtless a little trick often played at hazard), but he "ventured" to say that he was "happier than Mr. G. W. Foote with all his philosophy." Well, we doubt it. Anyhow, the "philosophy" was admitted. And nobody was ever likely to accuse the speaker of having too large a stock of *that* commodity.

Reynolds' appears to have taken a tip from the *Freethinker*. "The true believers," it said last week, must rejoice at the killing of the missionaries in China. To be sacrificed in such a way for the faith must, of course, mean a reward of eternal happiness; and, therefore, all good, pious, and religious people must be delighted to hear that these martyrs are 'safe in the arms of Jesus.'"

How much longer will the English public tolerate the inroads made upon their liberties by the canting Sabbatarian bigots who avail themselves of the Act passed in the reign of Charles II. of pious memory. Some retaliatory steps have been taken at Yarmouth, where the Corporation was summoned for Sunday trading, an attendant who takes admission money at the Corporation Pier being also named in the summons, which sets forth that the man was "pursuing his ordinary worldly calling on a day commonly called Sunday, such not being a work of necessity or charity." The prosecuting solicitor objected to three of the four Justices present adjudicating, as they were members of the Corporation or Watch Committee which set the ancient Act of Charles II. in motion. The magistrates having refused to withdraw, the solicitor declined to proceed, stating that a writ would be issued against the Corporation for giving and advertising Sunday performances.

Sunday music on Cromer pier has been threatened by the pious, as everything is which contributes to rational pleasure on the Lord's Day. Since the opening of Cromer Pier the season band has played thereon every Sunday evening from eight to ten o'clock. This has led to the Protection Commissioners, the local authority, being presented with a memorial against the performances. The petition, which was signed by local owners of property, deprecated the innovation, both on religious and financial grounds. They held that it would be detrimental to the best interests of the town were Sunday performances allowed.

Mr. Sydney Buxton, M.P., is a Liberal, but he is not liberal enough to refrain from joining the bigots in their outcry. The upshot is a compromise on the part of the Commissioners. The Sunday band is to be continued, but it is to play only sacred music. Well, what *is* sacred music? That question has never been answered.

A farmer's wife at Teignmouth, having armed herself with a paste-pot and some handbill Scriptural texts, proceeded to post up on railings, and other available spots, announcements relating to the Gospel and its message of "glad tidings and great joy." Unfortunately for her, she was observed in this evangelistic work, and has since been fined £5 and costs. A local newspaper observes: "The well-intentioned people who put up texts in all sorts of suitable and unsuitable places do not reflect that they are far more likely to cause irreverence and irritation than to do any real good."

The Rev. John Wakeford, of Liverpool, has been talking a little loosely to the Deeside Branch of the English Church Union. Amongst other reckless statements, he is credited with saying: "Attacks were sometimes made on the Church by journalists, but he did not think much of them. They had all come to the conclusion that what they saw in the public prints was for the main part falsehood. None of them paid much attention to what the newspapers said, although it was always assumed that people did. They constantly heard it said that journalists had a very great influence; they might have, but it was altogether in the opposite direction to what they wished. People read what the journalists said, and took it as an indication of what a fool might think." Poor journalists! It is not impossible, however, that, in common parlance, they may "get their own back" in regard to the Rev. John Wakeford, though, after all, he is but "small fry."

A German Catholic newspaper states that the Pope has resolved to enforce celibacy amongst the South African priests. Out of 15,000 there are 3,000 reported to be married and 4,000 keeping concubines.

In the bacteriological section of the Royal Institute of Public Health, meeting at Aberdeen, the medical officer of Weymouth called attention to the dangers to laymen of receiving sacramental wine in the cup. He urged that the clergy should be asked to make some modification in ritual. This suggests the query: If you can't drink out of the sacred chalice in the most solemn ordinance of the Church with impunity from infection, where, in the name of goodness and common sense, does Providence come in?

A "converted" Jew at Blyth is remanded on a charge of stealing money belonging to a gentleman with whom he lodged. "Spoiling the Egyptians" nowadays means a visit to the police-court unless it is done neatly and in accordance with law. As a "converted" Jew, Herman Rosenthal ought not to have been in want of any money. Unlimited funds are found by some of the silly home missionary societies, not only to buy a Jew up if he makes the least pretence of forsaking the faith of his forefathers, but for keeping him afterwards. Rosenthal has not availed himself of his resources.

Dr. Parker, we learn, has said good-bye to the City Temple, and gone for a holiday. But he returns to town to preach to the Institute of Journalists on September 9. To preach to pressmen is not an enviable task. But the Institute of Journalists is mainly composed of juniors who are not at all likely to be over-critical. Journalists of standing have

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nothing to do with the Institute, and they have been so sickened in the course of their careers with prelatical and minor pulpit discourses that they would willingly go miles away to escape them.

If Dr. Parker is wise, he will frame his remarks to suit the intelligence of young students of Pitman and hopeful geniuses who are just entering upon press life with dim notions of grammar and a sublime indifference to orthography, and with possibly a lavish paucity of ideas. A newspaper friend informs us that before a big oration by Gladstone a young reporter—such as these of the Journalists' Institute—went down on his knees and prayed to the Lord that he would get through his "three-minute" turns all right. In the result he was the most unsatisfactory member of the whole "ring," and but for the "check note" the verbatim would have gone wrong.

Just now there is one of those silly and perennial exclamations which are supposed to be witty, though no one can find out where the wit comes in, and in the present instance it is, "There's 'air." A poor barber shot himself in Highgate Cemetery. He had belonged to a sect called the Latter House of Israel, the members of which were supposed to wear their hair long and never cut their whiskers. He had hidden his long hair by piling it up under his hat for many years; but, owing to the excessive heat of last week, he got his assistant to cut it off, and had subsequently become insane with remorse.

The Lord—to whom people appeal on their knees whenever they are in trouble—might at least take care of his own tabernacles. It is an incidental object-lesson to these pious supplicants to inform them that the Lord is so indifferent about mundane matters that he has allowed the fine church of St. Gabriel, Willesden, to be practically destroyed by fire. The church was so reduced by flames that it became in the end roofless and gutted.

We learn from the *British Weekly* that Dr. Lorimer has recently delivered a discourse on modern thought. It is said that in dealing with the subject he "dismissed in turn Freethought, Agnosticism, Positivism, and Pessimism." This is rather a large undertaking, even for a preacher from Boston, U.S.A. But, though Freethought and Agnosticism are thus dismissed, it is quite possible they will survive and flourish. The charitable conclusion is that Dr. Lorimer did not know what he was talking about.

There was, however, a glimmer of sense in Dr. Lorimer's sermon when he said it was "no wonder that the learned and the cultured were often dissatisfied with Christianity when they saw what childish and feeble literature was circulated amongst Christians, and how extremely narrow were the views of some Christians."

Mr. Swinburne is superior, of course, to a great deal of criticism which may be attempted by small and vulgar people. Somebody who writes the "Literary Letter" in the *Rock* says the quality of Mr. Swinburne's earlier lyrics "makes us wish them to be even less read than they are." And there seems to be a suggestion of impiety. But that is really a recommendation of Swinburne's poems—which will probably survive any criticism in journals like the *Rock*.

A little girl about eight years of age, witnessing the ceremony of ordination at one of our recent Conference sessions, was much impressed, and, after the service, asked her mother what it meant. "What do you think it meant?" the mother inquired. "I don't know," was the answer, "unless the bishop was feeling of their heads to see if they had any brains before he sent them off to preach."

An Anglican Bishop the other day quoted a remark made to him by a competent observer in one of the universities within the last decade. "I said to him: 'How do you think things are going about belief among the young men?' 'Oh,' he said, 'I think that a very great number of the younger graduates hold the Christian faith. They are Christians, but I do not think that *they hold it with such intensity as to be willing to sacrifice very much for it.*'"

One must really feel sorry for the Chinese who have been "converted" to Christianity. They have had a frightfully rough time of it, and many of them now cease to exist. They might be regarded as martyrs if it were at all certain that they really understood the principles of the religion for which they have been put to death.

More Providence! A fatal volcanic eruption has taken place in Japan. Advices *viâ* Vancouver state that twenty-five people were killed by the eruption, which took place at Mount Adsuma.

With fawn-colored gloves and a hymn-book in his hands, John Driver was charged at Marylebone Police-court with drunkenness. As he could not pay the fine, he was removed to the cells, protesting that he had only been singing hymns. In his cell he broke some woodwork into splinters. On being brought back to court, he raved like a madman, shouted at the top of his voice that to prohibit preaching was against the Queen's authority, sang the Doxology, and then defied the magistrate to do his worst. He would show, he said, whether he had the pluck of a martyr in him. He was fined again, ordered to pay £2 damages, or in default to go to prison for a month.

Whilst a young domestic servant in the Euston-road was kneeling at the side of her bed, with her hands clasped in prayer, she suddenly died. The God to whom she was appealing seems to have paid so much attention to her supplications that he was not even aware that she was approaching a sudden end, or, being aware, was indifferent as to the fatal result which occurred—accelerated probably by the fervour of her appeals to him.

An American Christian scientist was called in by a Captain Boxer, of Brondesbury, to attend his child. At the inevitable inquest the Captain said Mr. Riley had been a qualified medical practitioner in America, but gave up practice in 1897, and had practised Christian science since. They believed in the power of prayer to heal the sick. Prayer was the initial method of restoring the sick, but they did not despise suitable food. Mr. Riley asked the parents if they wished to put implicit trust in God and witness's treatment, or call in a doctor, and they said they would trust God to the end. Dr. Slaughter said that death was due to debility, through premature birth; no medical man could have saved the child's life. A verdict of "Natural causes" was returned, the foreman remarking that the jury did not believe that prayer would save the life of a child.

The *Sunday Companion* publishes a sketch of a church at Austinburg, Ohio, which was dedicated as a place of worship by the breaking of a bottle of whisky over its spire. The services of a sailor were procured. With a rope in his hand, he climbed to the topmost point of the edifice, and as the last timber was placed he drew a bottle of whisky from the ground by means of a rope, and, breaking it over the spire, shouted: "Three cheers for the church."

Prophecy is certainly not confined to Israel. "Old Moore" has made some long shots for 1900, and has brought down more than one event. For example, he predicted that in May there might be expected a better feeling between England and Ireland, which was a very near shot at the Queen's visit. For May, too, he foretold that the Nihilists would break out and bring danger to a royal traveller by train. Well, the Prince of Wales was attacked by Sipido. At the end of July we were warned that a foreign potentate would be in danger; all the best of the medical world would be called in, but the end was certain. Again "Old Moore" seems to have hit the mark. He tells us we shall hear of grave troubles at Hong Kong, and that troops may be needed at Canton. All this was prophesied last autumn.

For August there is the following remarkable line: "The King of Italy is plagued by insidious foes, and should beware of Anarchists."

The humors of school examination-papers are illustrated by Dr. Haig Brown, who said that the question, "What is a cherub?" elicited the answer, "An immoral being of uncertain shape."

God, according to a sailor's wife, told her to pour boiling water over her child. Of course, it was a mistaken idea, but God did not interfere. The poor child died, and the mother has been sent to prison for three months.

But the specific rules of morality are not pronounced to be permanent and unalterable. How could society advance if they were? The community undergoes a silent revolution in its moral ideas as new tastes are generated, new passions raised, and new modes of existence and of thought are laid open; but alterations such as these, slow and scarce perceptible, cannot endanger the steady authority of morals. The sea and the dry land may be changing places, but, nevertheless, the sea and dry land are very distinguishable; the change is not inconsistent with the habitable nature of our globe, and each generation of mortals walks upon the shore neither deterred nor perplexed with sense of insecurity. —*William Smith.*

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N. B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stonecutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

MR. FOOTE has not found time for his usual article in this week's *Freethinker* in addition to what he has written specially on the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. His pen will be more represented in our next.

R. CHILD.—Thanks. We will deal with it next week. Your letter reached us late, owing to our absence from London.

CAVE CANEM.—Printer's errors will occur. We thank you for pointing them out, but it is hardly worth going back upon them. "Hamstringed" though is as right as "hamstrung," just as "hanged" is right as "hung." Both forms are quite permissible. As a matter of fact, Hume used the word "hamstringed" himself in relating the tragedy of the Saxon princess.

ANGLO-INDIAN.—Thanks. In our next.

ANDREW MILLAR, who means to subscribe to the Twentieth Century Fund, expresses an earnest hope that the Freethought Publishing Company will not suffer in consequence of it. In order that it may not, as far as he is concerned, he means to give to the new Fund what he would have spent on dearly-loved books.

S. P.—Received. Regular acknowledgment next week.

H. PERCY WARD.—Mr. Foote is writing you *re* the Demonstration. The other matter will be dealt with in our next issue. Thanks for your letter.

A. HALLAM.—We are at a distance from the *Freethinker* file, and cannot tell you the date of the articles on Brother Prince. Mr. Neale, who wrote those articles, will probably supply the reference in our next.

HORACE DAWSON.—Thanks for your letter and cutting, which will serve as material for a paragraph.

E. VETTERLEIN, honorary secretary of the West Ham Branch, disclaims for himself and his fellow members all sympathy with the correspondent who complained of the Freethought Demonstration not being held after the speakers were all drenched to the skin. Mr. Vetterlein hopes that "none of the ladies or gentlemen suffered from the severe wetting they received." We are sorry to say that Mr. Moss was terribly hoarse for several days, and that Miss Vance has not yet got rid of the sore throat she contracted.

G. HOWLETT.—You will find Huxley's *Physiography* just the book you are seeking. Order it of any good bookseller.

H. R. CLIFTON.—Pleased to receive your letter. We note your statement that the advertisement of "S. A." of Margate in the *Freethinker* has introduced you and your family to suitable furnished apartments, with cleanliness, nice cooking, good attendance, and moderate charges.

F. E. WILLIS.—Cuttings received with thanks. Yes, the stormy weather that has succeeded the tropical weather is a signal proof of the wonderfulness of "Providence." We never remember anything like it at this time of the year.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings. Letter will appear next week.

A. H. TABRUM.—Your letter shall be inserted in our next issue.

W. G. M. (Liverpool).—You will find the subjects you mention dealt with in Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*.

M. A. (Cantab).—Winwood Reade, who died very young, has left a masterpiece of style and collation of facts in his *Martyrdom of Man*. His novel, the *Outcast*, is a deeply-interesting story.

RECEIVED.—Torch of Reason—Two Worlds—Lucifer—Birkenhead News—Friedenker.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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Sugar Plums.

THE postponed Sunday Freethought Demonstration in Brockwell Park will take place on August 26. Full details will appear in due course.

There is a paucity of "Sugar Plums" in this week's *Freethinker* owing to the editor's absence from London. The paragraphs under this heading are not easily written by other hands.

The Club and Institute Union Hall, in Clerkenwell-road, has been engaged by the N. S. S. Executive's sub-committee for the proposed London Conference on Secular Education and the forthcoming School Board Elections. This Conference will take place on Tuesday evening, September 11. Representatives are being invited from all the advanced bodies in the metropolis.

The Annual Children's Excursion, as already announced, is fixed for the first Saturday in September. The arrangements are in the hands of Miss Vance, the N. S. S. Secretary. We hear from her that Mr. George Anderson has given her a cheque for three guineas towards the expenses.

Freethinkers are requested not to forget the claims of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. It would be a great mischief if this enterprise were to suffer in consequence of other appeals. This enterprise is absolutely *vital* to the movement. Everything turns upon the maintenance of an organ of publicity. We hope, therefore, that a considerable number of fresh Shares will be taken up before the Annual General Meeting early in September.

The Belief in God not Innate.

THE belief in God has often been advanced as not only the greatest, but the most complete of all the distinctions between man and the lower animals. It is, however, impossible, as we have seen, to maintain that this belief is innate or instinctive in man. On the other hand, a belief in all-pervading spiritual agencies seems to be universal, and apparently follows from a considerable advance in man's reason, and from a still greater advance in his faculties of imagination, curiosity, and wonder. I am aware that the assumed instinctive belief in God has been used by many persons as an argument for his existence. But this is a rash argument, as we should thus be compelled to believe in the existence of many cruel and malignant spirits, only a little more powerful than man, for the belief in them is far more general than in a beneficent deity. The idea of a universal and beneficent creator does not seem to arise in the mind of man until he has been elevated by long-continued culture.

He who believes in the advancement of man from some low organised form will naturally ask, How does this bear on the belief in the immortality of the soul? The barbarous races of man, as Sir J. Lubbock has shown, possess no clear belief of this kind, but arguments derived from the primeval beliefs of savages are, as we have just seen, of little or no avail. Few persons feel any anxiety from the impossibility of determining at what precise period in the development of the individual, from the first trace of a minute germinal vesicle, man becomes an immortal being; and there is no greater cause for anxiety because the period cannot possibly be determined in the gradually ascending organic scale.

I am aware that the conclusions arrived at in this work [*The Descent of Man*] will be denounced by some as highly irreligious, but he who denounces them is bound to show why it is more irreligious to explain the origin of man as a distinct species by descent from some lower form, through the laws of variation and natural selection, than to explain the birth of the individual through the laws of ordinary reproduction. The birth, both of the species and of the individual, are equally parts of that grand sequence of events which our minds refuse to accept as the result of blind chance. The understanding revolts at such a conclusion, whether or not we are able to believe that every slight variation of structure, the union of each pair in marriage, the dissemination of each seed, and other such events, have all been ordained for some special purpose.

—*Charles Darwin.*

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Holiday Heresy.

In the happy summer-time, when the sun irresistibly suggests a retreat to the sands of the everlasting sea, or to the shelter of inland woods, or it may be, with the well-to-do, a lazy yachting cruise in search of gentle breeze; or when the arrival of the season prompts a pursuit of grouse on health-improving moors—the average man gaily starts upon a holiday. He takes a certain amount of impedimenta—as little as possible. He leaves behind him as many as he may of his business, domestic, or society cares.

But he is obliged to carry with him to the sands, or upon the sea, or the moors, what he may be pleased to call his brains—big or little, as they may happen to be. He cannot, if he has intellectual capacity—and these remarks have no application to people who are not so equipped—separate himself from his ideas. They occur to him inevitably at more or less frequent intervals. Not ideas about mere pleasure and sport, or commonplace matters, but about greater and wider subjects, which always, and under divers conditions, must gain admission to the reflective mind.

He may, if on the beach, find his meditations on life and destiny disturbed by "nigger" bands or Salvation Army drums. On board he may be equally disturbed by feminine attentions which he has to receive or, more likely, to bestow; or, if on the moors, there are the comments of his companions, with the unspoken, but still eloquent, admiration or disdain of sporting attendants. But he carries with him a thinking arrangement which, whether by his will or against it, is always at work. And he thinks at intervals, and especially when alone, of questions which concern him, not so much personally, but as a unit of mankind. Of course, he may propose to cry "Avaunt!" to all speculations of a philosophical or theological kind, but, nevertheless, they assail him. He is still as much their victim as though he were at home. There are no holidays from one's cherished ideas. They *will* present themselves, and changed conditions are powerless to effect their banishment.

And so the holiday-maker of religious turn of mind is ever and anon "looking through nature to nature's god," regardless of the logical sequence that, if nature requires a creator to account for its existence, there must surely be required a maker to account for him—otherwise we return to the original position. On the other hand, the adherent of Freethought principles cannot refrain from according to his equally-cherished opinions a like attention. Possibly it is when "far from the madding crowd," lying on the sands with one's eyes turned to the blue vault above, or reclining on some grassy bed upon which the sunshine falls through the leafy awning of overhanging trees, that rumination on these and kindred subjects is at once easiest, pleasantest, and perhaps most profitable.

If the visitor to the seaside should entertain liberal opinions, and, being "well-grounded" in them, should desire to "let them rest," he is bound to find himself setting his back up even in the course of a limited stay. Sunday at the seaside—that is to say, at popular resorts—is sure to arouse his spirit of militant Freethought. He may have started, and arrived, and even spent several days in forgetfulness of his special views. But when the Sunday comes round, he finds the "old Adam" arising, and that, too, in the way of wrath. In the morning the people who wish to appear "respectable" are marching off to church or chapel. They please themselves in so doing, but the visitor will find that they have—if local magnates—previously made arrangements to displease *him*. They have stopped his Sunday morning paper; he must shave himself or go unshaven; coach drives, at many resorts, are forbidden him; cycling, though it cannot be stopped, is looked at askance as "bad form"; he may not play billiards—cards are too shocking to think of; public bands in some places are perforce dumb; concerts are not allowed; steam-boats are stopped; rowing and angling are considered reprehensible; golf is tabooed. Really, it is difficult to know what to do on the Lord's Day in many holiday places where much is thought of godly idleness and a dead set is made against rational recreative rest. Some of these restrictions the liberal-minded visitor may set aside regardless of odium. In respect to others he is powerless. Then it is that he becomes blasphemous, and pours out his indignation on Sabbatarianism and religion generally.

Nothing so tends to confirm the heretic in his heresy as these restrictions on his individual liberty. Later on in the day he feels that insult is added to injury by outdoor Sabbath evening services, at which there is much godly howling by the people who have done their level best to make the day, for him, as miserable and unprofitable as possible.

Have you ever noticed how joyously everybody—the pious and the unbelieving alike—arise at the seaside and other holiday resorts on Monday morning? There is a general gasp of relief. It seems as though some stifling sensation had been removed, and one could once more breathe, with wholesome and invigorating inspirations, the free, fresh air of heaven. Away now with all the pious conventionalities which on the previous day have imposed a worse than Egyptian bondage. There are now six days in front in which everything reasonable in the way of pleasure is possible. The prevailing sentiment, even amongst the "unco guid," is, when interpreted by practical manifestations, to thank God, not for the seventh day, but for the six days which follow.

What if it were all Sabbaths at the seaside! Good Lord deliver us! Life there would not be worth living. Holiday-making would be a farce and a sham. Folks would stick hard and fast at home, and railway companies relying on seaside excursion traffic would be ruined. Ought not shareholders to go down on their knees and thank God that he has only taken to himself one day out of seven? Francis Neale.

The Virgin Sat On.

For the last two months the clerical Spanish and French journals have given considerable space to the "Visions" of Francisca Guillen, a poor, hysterical peasant girl of Lorqui, in the province of Murcia. Some sanguine Castilians seem to have hoped that Lorqui had a chance of becoming a rival to the French Lourdes. Francisca, like the famous Bernadotte, of Lourdes, was favored with several visits from the Virgin Mary, who sometimes appeared with the dead body of the Savior in her arms, as the Mother of Sorrows. At other times she came in queenly splendor, attended by a court of angels. The girl's tales found ready and unsceptical acceptation with all the members of her own family, and amongst the credulous villagers of Lorqui. Sick and troubled folk from various Murcian communes began to flock to Lorqui to obtain the benefits of Francisca's intercessions with her supernatural visitor, and the girl at last undertook to work cures, not in her own name, but in that of the Virgin. She gave the pilgrims little stones marked with a cross, which she affirmed to have fallen from the mantle of the Blessed Virgin, and to possess miraculous powers of healing. At last the strange proceedings at Lorqui attracted the attention of "the Godless Press," which is pure Castilian for a Radical newspaper, and the secular interviewer, with note-book and pencil, appeared in the village. Meanwhile the crowd of pilgrims who thronged to Lorqui, and had to pay for food and lodging to the owners of the wretched huts, brought the business to the notice of the Spanish Government. The Government, as might be expected in Castile, was powerless to grapple with the scandals, and had to appeal to the Bishop of Murcia, Monsignore Maura, to intervene with the spiritual arm. That prelate, happily, had no ambition to have a new pilgrimage resort established in his diocese, and issued a pastoral letter to his clergy, requiring them to expose the folly and superstition of Francisca's pretended visions. The State then plucked up courage to follow the Church, and ordered a medical commission to examine the hysterical visionary. The business has ended in the confinement of Francisca in the Provincial Lunatic Asylum.

—*Daily News.*

One can say without exaggeration that the most religious times and the most religious peoples, or those in which or among whom the power of the Church has been the strongest, have, generally speaking, been the most immoral. One has evidence enough in the horrors of the Middle Ages, and, if to-day it be otherwise, it is not to religion that we owe the change, but to the spread of education and the progress of intelligence. Experience teaches us that at all times the blackest crimes and the most degraded criminals have been associated with excess of sanctity, and this among peoples generally, as in individuals.—*Ludwig Büchner.*

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The Tragedy of Religion.

HOLY HATRED OF THIS WORLD FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD.

RELIGIONS agree in reducing human life to a religious tragedy. Religions are written in the minor key; they are unanimous in the exaltation of sacrifice and the worship of sorrow; they rejoice in sadness; they sanctify despair; they can only feel good when they feel bad. It is religion that has chanted the lamentations of the world. Under whatever name or form, the same gloomy view is found. Given any religion old or new, and they are weeping and wailing. Religion might be classified as sanctified pessimism, or holy hatred of this world for the glory of God. Buddhism taught that it was a great misfortune to be born, and, because man had acquired so much demerit by being born, he must be born over and over again until the infliction of birth and successive incarnations had sufficiently cleansed him from guilt and fitted him to pass on beyond the necessity of any further humiliation of that kind. That old system also teaches that the final and supreme good is absorption into the unconscious existence where individuality is merged as a drop of dew is merged into the sea. Mohammed taught that human life was but the sport and bauble of an inexorable fate, that man could neither choose nor resist, that in the great game of life men were not players to move, but pawns to be moved. The Christian theology taught that this poor world and everything it contained were cursed by its creator; it is now under his insatiate wrath and spending on to its inevitable doom.

UNIVERSAL PESSIMISM OF RELIGION.

No task is more difficult than to account for this pessimism that pervades religions. The fact that it is universal is startling. If the religious instinct had shown some of the versatility of genius, if there had been some rapt and illuminated imagination that had dared to offer an amendment or propose a change to the vindictive God, it would have been a delight to come upon it—it would have been a pleasure to exalt that religious genius, and make of him a saint. To his shrine we would have made loyal pilgrimages, and put laurels above his dust; but there is no such pleasing exception; everywhere is the same lamentation—everywhere the despair of this world, and, impliedly, the despair of its great author.

An explanation may be attempted by remembering that all religions are old. All the systems that we speak of commonly, when we refer to the religions of man, have come to us from ages long since past. Religion is the only thing that has been transported into the present time unchanged. If men were attempting now to carry forward the science of agriculture, using the implements of two thousand or five thousand years ago, they would be laughed at. If men undertook to carry on the affairs of the business world, and used the methods that were in vogue thirty years ago, they would be distanced by every competitor in the field; but if they should attempt to apply the ideas and the methods that prevailed two thousand years ago, they would be sought after as specimens for a museum. If literature, law, custom, morals, or commerce were attempted upon the ideas of two thousand years in the past, the result is obvious; and yet religion, with theories promulgated thousands of years ago, claims the same allegiance and the same authority that it claimed then. It has admitted of no amendment, suffered no change, responded to no new urgencies, yielded to no new demands. It was pessimism and despair two thousand years ago, and remains so still.

GOD-INFATUATION.

We may find a partial explanation by remembering that men in the olden times had to imagine their gods—they do yet; but when we have a religion that is old enough, with traditions that are hoary with age, ancient and unclean with the dust of centuries, it is the infatuation of thousands of people to regard them as peculiarly sacred and as vouchsafed to this world by a revealing God. A little thought will show anyone that the gods that were formulated thousands of years ago were precisely what the gods must be that are formulated now—the result of the imagination of man. Man does not know and he did not know—he guessed. To know God then was as impossible as it is now. There was also a profound ignorance of nature. Man did not understand its purposes or its methods, he only saw results; he was acquainted with the external phases of phenomena; he did not know how they came or passed away, and in that superficial knowledge, with that dense ignorance, he attempted to account for things. How could he arrive but at a false conception of the great God that is behind all nature? Besides, man at that time was unable to account for the presence of suffering and imperfection and sin—as he is yet; but he has sense enough now to suspend his judgment. He is not driven on by the infatuation of making a creed and formulating a religion and establishing a church and instituting a priesthood to wield the spiritual authority over men. He is not driven on by that fatal infatuation to explain sin and suffering by some metaphysical device upon which he may establish a system of theology. If the religion of this world has made any progress at all, if the religious sentiment has been elevated above what it was in the ages past, then that elevation and that new illumination are most conspicuous in this: that before some of the great and insolvable problems of life the reverent man, the thinker, the truly religious soul, dares to stand and say: "Can you explain that? Do you understand that? I cannot."

MIGHT WAS RIGHT WHEN GOD WAS MADE.

Then the old religions were formulated before man had advanced far enough to have a moral God. The idea of justice cannot be found in any of the old conceptions of God. The idea of morality is wanting in all the religions or theologies that attempt to explain the relation of God to this world. That applies to the Christian theologies just the same, and the reason for it was this: All of the life of man in the early ages was founded upon the conception of power. Might necessarily implied right. It made it right; God was all-powerful, therefore infinitely right, no matter what he did. Perfectly right was it for him to drown the world because he had within the grasp of his hand all the waters of the clouds and skies, of the rivers and of the seas. Therefore the flood was right. Perfectly right was it for him to burn up cities and destroy women and children because he could command consuming fire. It was the power that made the right in whatever God did, and that will explain a great many things about our theology. Hell is right and eternal pain is right because God is infinite and has power to create one and inflict the other. The question of morality or justice, or even decency, does not enter; it is simply one of power.

Then we may partly account for the pessimism by remembering that man was not then able to separate the sense of injury from the thirst for revenge. His moral idea was so low that to be injured implied the right, if the power existed, of repaying with vengeance. Thus men, when they were imagining God, unable to do any better, made him a vindictive being, a God of revenge, a God that would, and did, destroy with fire and flood. And when in time the floods could be accounted for by the giving way of barriers of natural walls, or cloudbursts; when the destruction of cities could be accounted for by natural causes, as by eruptions of volcanoes or earthquakes, and they could no longer satisfy their feelings that God must revenge himself by saying, "that was his flood for your sins," "that was his fire for your irreligion," then they said: "Out in the future whither all footsteps tend and whence none depart, out in the irrevocable future, is an abyss which God has filled with fire, and all are going there who do not pass our way." So we have the religion of pessimism and despair, and the teaching that human life is a tragedy, and it is a misfortune to be born. Through it all runs the cry of despair, the tremor of fear, and the agony of apprehension.

DEGRADING PRACTICES AND IDEAS OF RELIGION.

All of these things dishonor God. Every conception of religion that has ever reddened an altar with blood is an insult to the infinite. Think of men—men who know pain and the love of life—taking doves and pigeons and cutting their white throats, reddening the feathers of their breasts with blood, robbing the air of

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these visitors of the wing, and spreading them upon an altar, and then burning them with fire to please the being that made them and taught them to build nests and care for their young. It is as wicked as it is to kill those same birds to adorn women's hats—just as wicked and no more religious. Every conception of religion that exalts penance and self-inflicted pain as something by which the infinite may be approached or appeased or placated is an insult to the infinite. Every conception of religion that promulgates a beggary of prayer as if it might change or alter the plan or make favorable the infinite insults him. Every plan of salvation that religion has ever outlined has proceeded upon the supposition that God wanted pain, and was pleased with the sight of blood—could look on agony, and have his divine heart touched. The cruel, hideous, ghastly, blood-marked cross is an insult to the intelligence of man and the infinite goodness of God. The entire attempt to explain God has been a signal failure, the old and the new alike—all a failure.

Just now our Presbyterian friends are awakening to the consciousness that their formula by which God is required to work, a receipt book which they made for the infinite, is not up to date. There is a little controversy about the necessity of change. The change suggested is this, whether the creed shall say God made hell and then ordained man to go there, or whether it shall say he just made hell and then made man and left him to go there of his own accord. For my part, I cannot see that it will make any difference in a thousand years with any of us how we get there, just so we are there. The main thing is to keep hell in the creed. The good tidings of great joy would not be joyful without hell. We would suggest to the Presbyterians that, instead of changing their creed, they change their God. If there is one thing that this world can get along without having it is the God of the murderer of Michael Servetus.

PREPOSTEROUS NOTIONS ABOUT SIN.

The old pessimism of religion grows largely out of a false and irrational conception of sin. Let us understand this thing that men call sin. No one who has the capacity for suffering; no one who has known friendship and its cost or love and its agony, can deny that in this world of ours there are paths trod by naked feet and paths strewn with thorns. No one can doubt that in the cup pressed to human lips are mingled all the drops of bitterness. All know that the world, as it is, is bad enough, but does it help it any to formulate a theory of sin that makes it a million times worse than it is? Is that getting ahead any? We are told by the religions that sin is an offence against God. Can a man injure the infinite? Can he rob him? Can he make him unhappy? Can he destroy the infinite stillness of his immovable calm? Can he take anything away from him?

How can a man injure God? But they say sin is a nature and that nature guilt. That is the darling old Calvinistic doctrine of sin—sin is a nature and that nature guilt—that is worth remembering when a person knows that he is pretty well established in his theology. Just to be born, just to be here, only a tenant in this world, just to breathe the sweet air and look at the fields and sun and stars, is guilt. That is our nature, and that nature guilt, and that is sin. But God made this nature; then is not God a sinner? But God did not make it this way; he made it clean and wholesome and pure, and then the devil changed it and drew across it his slimy track; but God made the devil. Ah! but the devil was a rebellious angel, and God cast him out of heaven and sent him to hell; but he did not stay there—it was the bottomless pit, and maybe he got out that way.

If sin is a nature and that nature guilt, then the individual is exempt from responsibility, and no just creator can damn him for that. Sin is not a nature, and that nature is not guilt. I deny it in the name of all friendships that are loyal, of all love that is pure: nature at its best is holy and sacred and divine.

DISCREDITING AND DEFAMING MOTHER EARTH.

The Church has made an unreality of sin, and so it has weakened the emphasis upon right living and good conduct and morality by laying an exorbitant and irrational emphasis upon sin as a mere fiction. The wrong that a man can commit is against his neighbor and against himself. If there were no injustices performed by man against man, sin would be eradicated from this world and "leave not a wrack behind." This pessimism of religion discredits the old earth—God's earth. There are two ways of treating the world from a religious standpoint; one is just to revile it. It is involved in this guilt of nature. It was cursed; even the soil—the soil was cursed. Think of a God cursing the soil. Think what the soil does for beauty and beneficence. All we eat, all we drink, all we wear, comes out of the soil; but the old earth has been cursed, and we must revile it. We must be sorry that we have come, and promise never to come again. We must abhor this world, and say that this "vile world is no friend of grace to help us on to God"; we must long for that day when our eyes shall look for the last time upon its descending sun, and we can spread our glorified wings and perch on some other world. That is the religious way of viewing this world—shun it, abhor it, call it vile, because God cursed it. If there are any pleasures, come away, distrust them, because we have no right to be happy; we ought to be miserable: that is the only way to be happy.

Our Methodist friends have a little controversy on their hands. They have a rule (No. 17,000) that states that no one must dance or play cards or go to the theatre. Notwithstanding the rule, a few of them do those things; and now the question is whether they shall discipline the persons or discipline the discipline. Probably the consistent way would be for them to let the rule stand, and put in a few more things. People cannot pay too much for heaven; it is cheap at any price. If this world is vile—a gin-trap set for souls, a lurking-place for smiling devils that deceive—then let it all be abhorred. Let us wear sackcloth and ashes, and practise Delsarte treatment for lengthening out our faces longer still. There is nothing so effective as consistency in religion.

The other way of treating the world is that of the new religion—a religion so new as to scarcely be included in the religious classification. That is to deny the world and to say it is a delusion; there is not anything there, there is nothing here but us, we are all of it; there is no such thing here as a theatre or pain. There is nothing external, it is all mind; we are just thoughts. Somehow we have been deceived; we have a race belief that we live on a world and revolve with it about a central sun; but we do not; we are just a company of invisible, intangible thinks and thinklets.

COULD WE IMPROVE THE PLAN OF THE UNIVERSE?

It is simply a question of individual choice. For my part, I believe I would rather take the first position. I think I should feel more at home living in a real world, though it were vile, than living in a world that was not there. The rational plan is to take the universe on trust. What if we cannot explain something, what is there that we can explain? Why should theology, in its arrogance and unmitigated egotism, seek to account for the infinite in particular and detail? Sometimes we think we could have made this world a little better.

> Ah, love, could you and I with him conspire
> To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
> Would not we shatter it to bits, and then
> Remould it nearer to our hearts' desire?

But could we, honestly? What change could we suggest in the ordering of this world that we are sure would be an improvement? Suppose we were to take out some of the suffering. What suffering could we take out and not destroy more beauty and good things than we restored, or impair more values than we increased? All suffering is kind; all suffering is wise. There is no pain of the mind or flesh but what comes as the inevitable consequence of some law transgressed, and to make the transgressor exempt from that consequence would be a worse happiness and most terrible doom.

THE PUNISHMENT OF BEING IGNORED.

Years ago, so long now that it seems as if it were in another existence, I was behind a rude desk in a country school-house, a very small boy, but pretty well matured and somewhat precocious in the ability for making trouble for the teacher. I think every punishment of

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every kind that could be devised or imagined by the versatile genius of a large number of country school teachers had been exhausted in my particular case, without any particular results; then this thing happened. One day the teacher began to ignore everything I did. The "things" began to get more numerous and boisterous, yet no notice was taken; talking out loud, throwing pellets, afterwards books, then smashing a slate over a desk, leaving the seat and running about the school-room; still absolutely no attention was paid to anything whatever. I swear to you that all the punishments ever inflicted could not, and did not, equal that of being ignored and being unable to be treated as a culprit. I was no longer given the poor dignity of an offender. I was outside of law, outside of rules; I was no longer one of them. I have thought of it ten thousand times, and when I have rebelled at the suffering of this world, and cried out at the pain, and in anguish said, "O Lord, how long?" I have thought there were no sinners fallen so low but that this infinite frame of things we call nature, the universal God, holds them still in such an attitude of dignified regard that he counts them worthy to suffer whenever they shall transgress. I will believe that the old world, with all its pain and anguish and longing and heart-aching is best as it is. I decline to apologise for the infinite power that made it, and I decline to accept any theology descriptive of him or any formula that explains his purpose or his method, or any religion that implies or expresses it in any way—a God that needs to be apologised for.

GOD SHOULD PREFER HIS CHILDREN TO BE HAPPY.

The rational view of this old world is to accept it as it is, and to count and keep in mind its assets and their values. If I drag on the sounding wave-washed shore of time the net of experience for three score years and ten and gather at last, with sand and shells and weeds and slime, the jewels rare of pure and stainless love, I shall not count the labor vain. We should use this old world in a normal way for the end of happiness. Not to please God, but to please ourselves and those we love, is the highest aim. The God that wrote the invisible score for the chorus of the forest and the field, the God that taught the morning stars at creation's dawn the song they are singing in the silence still, and touched with exquisite artistic hand the lips of the flower with passion's color, and laid his own lips upon it, and breathed upon it once to make its own breath fragrant for ever, is better pleased, I hold, with the happiness of happy men and women than with the sadness, real or feigned, of lying devotees at blood-stained shrines. The happy are always good, the good are always happy. Whereas a man may be religious, and be neither happy nor good—he may be a pious nuisance. I think again of dear old Tom Pinch and his lie. I don't know how many times I have referred to it, but this is once more. When he gave that five-pound note to Martin Chuzzlewit when Martin was going away, Martin did not find it for a long time, and when he found it he knew that out of his poverty and suffering Tom had given it to him with this little note, "I do not need it, Martin." He knew he did; he knew he went to bed every night hungry, and in the cold days shivered from inadequate clothing; he knew Tom lied when he said he did not need it; and then the great author said about Tom: "I had rather have to fan my brow in the dying hour with the white feather of falsehood such as thine than all the quills that were ever plucked from the sharp porcupine, reproachful truth, since time began." And so, leaving the religious tragedy for the religious pessimists, and the weeping and wailing aud gnashing of teeth for sins that were never commiited, to those who are persuaded that they did commit them before they were born, and the agony of forensic remorse for sin to the people who believe in an angry and revengeful God, let us take a rational view of him and of his world, and of destiny and of his children, and help "to eliminate superstition from religion and cleanse the vermin from the garden of God." J. E. ROBERTS.

—*The Truthseeker* (New York).

Do you know the story of the pupil teacher under examination on the New Testament, who wrote as an answer:—"On this subject the Bible is almost entirely silent, but for full details see Farrar's *Life of Christ*"?—*Saturday Review.*

Profane Jokes.

"Now, boys," said the Sunday-school teacher, "our lesson to-day teaches us that if we are good while here on earth, when we die we will go to a place of everlasting bliss. But suppose we are bad, then what will become of us?" "We'll go to a place of everlasting blister," replied a small boy at the foot of the class.

"Is this Bible the latest revised edition?" asked the Imperialist. "Yes, sir," replied the book agent. "You will notice that it has an appendix containing the business cards of all the prominent manufacturers of ordnance and armor plate."—*Corning Democracy.*

Sceptic—"You still believe in Spiritualism, and yet at the *séance* last night the medium called up your grandmother, and she didn't know how many daughters she had." Believer—"Oh, well, grandmother's memory was getting very poor a few days before she died."—*Judge.*

"Young man," said the long, lean gentleman in the clerical clothes, "did you ever pause and think that each tick of the clock brings you another moment nearer the grave?" "I was thinking of something of that kind this morning," cheerfully replied the young man with the red necktie, "only the idea struck me that each tick brought pay-day that much closer."—*Indianopolis Press.*

"I am going to stop and look back," said Lot's wife, who was a short distance in advance. "Don't!" urged Lot. "It will go hard with you if you do!" But she disregarded his warning, with the result recorded elsewhere. "Well, I called the turn on her all right," panted Lot, struggling on. —*Chicago Tribune.*

Smith—"Brown's turned Christian Scientist." Jones—"Brown! Well, that beats me. How'd it happen?" Smith—"His mother-in-law was dangerously ill."—*Brooklyn Life.*

What is Left of Christianity?

The time was when Christianity stood for something, when there was no dispute about the faith held by Christians. The dogmas of orthodoxy were preached as Christian truths. Hell was once a burning fact, heaven an alluring reality. The devil was no myth, but an actual devil whose business of ruining souls was carried on night and day. God's wrath was a common theme of the pulpit and vicarious atonement a better way to salvation than all the roads of good deeds ever built by toiling hands and bleeding hearts. The Garden of Eden bloomed in the fields of faith as palpably as the peak of Monadnock kisses the sky, and Adam and Eve were the sculptured models of God's image carved by the divine chisel, and the *whole* Bible was God's word of truth to man. When we refer to these things now, we are informed that we are "behind the times"; that hell and heaven are "states of existence," not places; that the devil is only "a word to express evil"; that the Garden of Eden story is an Eastern fable; that man is "saved by character," not by faith; that it is "an insult to God to say that he gets angry"; and that "no intelligent Christian regards the Bible as all equally inspired and true," etc. With all these dogmas dead, we would like to know what there is left of Christianity.

—*Boston Investigator.*

A Motto for the Baptists.

Some few years ago, says the New York *Truthseeker*, a Mr. Aiken, an old friend of Colonel Ingersoll's, made a bad break of asking him for money for a church. A copy of the letter he sent in reply has just been found by Mrs. Farrell, the Colonel's literary executor, among his papers. Here it is, and it just fits the case:—

No. 45 Wall-street, New York, Nov. 20, 1890.

Mark M. Aiken, Esq., Paris, Ill.—My Dear Friend,—I often think of you and often speak of you, and I remember the old days with pleasure. I received your letter to-day in reference to the Baptist church. You say it is nearly completed, with the exception of the roof. I do not see why there should be any roof on a Baptist church. They believe in salvation by water, and why they should fight the "means of grace" with a roof is beyond my comprehension. Thanking you for your letter, I remain, as ever your friend, R. G. INGERSOLL.

P.S.—Motto for the Baptist church:—

The wetter,
The better.

Science knows nothing of the origin or destiny of Nature, who or what made the sun and gave his rays their alleged power, who or what made and bestowed upon the ultimate particles of matter their wondrous power of interaction? Science does not know. The mystery, though pushed back, remains unaltered.—*Tyndall.*

Let any man once show the world that he feels
Afraid of its bark, and 'twill fly at his heels;
Let him fearlessly face it, 'twill leave him alone;
But 'twill fawn at his feet if he flings it a bone.
—*Owen Meredith*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

East London Branch (Milwards, 144 Whitechapel-road): 8, Half-yearly Meeting.

Open-air Propaganda.

Station-road (Camberwell): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
Peckham Rye: 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
Brockwell Park: 3.15 and 6.30, C. Cohen.
Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, C. Cohen.
Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies.
Kilburn (Glengall-road): 7.15, F. A. Davies.
Hammersmith (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, F. Schaller.
Finsbury Park: 3.30, A lecture.
Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 3.15, F. A. Davies, "The Ethics of Secularism"; 6.15, R. P. Edwards.
Mile End Waste: 11.30, E. Leggatt, "Religious Education in the Board Schools"; 7.15, S. E. Easton. August 15, at 8.15, R. P. Edwards.
Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, E. Pack.
West Ham Branch (Stratford Grove): 7.30, E. Leggatt.

COUNTRY.

Chatham Secular Society (Queen's-road, New Brompton): Closed during the months of July and August.

Failsworth Secular Sunday School: Annual Services; H. P. Ward—2.45, "The Gospel of Secularism"; 6.30, "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secularist Platform." Hymns, etc., by the choir. Instrumental Music by the Failsworth String Band.

Liverpool: Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. Closed until September 2. Outdoor lectures at the Monument, bottom of London-road, on August 12, 19, and 26, at 7 p.m.; and on September 2, at 3 p.m.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—August 12, m., Clerkenwell Green; a. and e., Brockwell Park. 19, a. and e., Victoria Park.

Arthur B. Moss, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—August 26, m., Mile End.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—August 12, Failsworth; 19, Northampton; 26, Birmingham. September 10, Debate at Bradford; 16, Birmingham. October 1 and 2, Debate at Birmingham.

F. A. Davies, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—August 12, m., Hyde Park; a., Victoria Park; e., Kilburn. 19, m., Battersea; e., Hammersmith. 26, a. and e., Brockwell Park. September 2, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 9, Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

Ingersoll's Last Lecture.

"WHAT IS RELIGION?"

An Address delivered before the American Free Religious Association, at Boston, June 2, 1899.

Freethinkers should keep a copy of this Lecture always by them. It was Ingersoll's last utterance on the subject of religion. It shows him to have been a "rank Atheist" to the very end. Moreover, it is a summary of his life's teaching, and embalms his ripest thought.

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(Continued from p. 512.)

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[*Continued on p. 511. Look There!*]

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THE

Freethinker

Editod by G. W. FOOTE.

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Shakespeare: The Man.

UNDER this arresting title a slender volume has just appeared from the pen of Mr. Goldwin Smith; the publishers being Morang and Co., of Toronto, and the English agent Mr. T. Fisher Unwin. The author's object, according to his sub-title, is "to find traces of the dramatist's personal character in his dramas." But this is not what the author really attempts. Such an enterprise would involve the most careful and subtle analysis, and the result would extend to far more than these seventy-seven pages of type, of twenty narrow lines each, surrounded with extraordinary and extravagant margins. Mr. Goldwin Smith merely endeavors, in a rather cursory fashion, to deduce some of Shakespeare's *opinions* from his writings. In doing this he prints several long quotations, which help to make a small book of his little essay. By way of "apology" he expresses a doubt whether "familiarity with Shakespeare is so common as it was in former days"—a negative phenomenon which he associates with the "tidal-wave of popular and sensational fiction now flowing." But is not this a mistaken idea? Nothing in the London publishing world is so remarkable as the multiplicity of editions of Shakespeare. Library editions and pocket editions pour forth almost every season. That they are purchased goes without saying; and that they find readers is at least presumable. We will allow that the vast bulk of the British public are ignorant of Shakespeare's works; but that is only because they are ignorant of all high and serious literature. Yet the people who do read such literature are certainly, if slowly, increasing in number; and we venture to say that there are many more students of Shakespeare to-day than there ever were before.

Professor Smith remarks that materials connected with Shakespeare's personal history have been "gathered with the most loving and persevering industry." "Unhappily," he adds, "they amount to very little." Strictly speaking, this is true; relatively speaking, it is false. Shakespeare was not a public man, in the then prevailing sense of the expression. He was not a soldier, a politician, a diplomatist, or even a religious sectarian. He belonged to a profession that was more or less disreputable, and as a man of letters he could only win distinction within a very limited circle. It is not to be expected, therefore, that we should be able to learn as much about him personally as we can about Lord Bacon, for instance, or Sir Walter Raleigh. Both these men were great writers, but they were also public men in the fullest sense of the word. Bacon was Lord Chancellor of England, and Raleigh was a renowned adventurer and explorer. Considering who and what Shakespeare was, it is wonderful that we know so much about his personal history. We have more ample and precise records of his life than we have of the life of any other dramatist of the period; or even of the life of a splendid, courtly poet like Spenser, who was patronised by Elizabeth, and had several other patrons amongst the proudest nobility. It is high time, in our opinion, to drop the common, but rather silly, astonishment at the paucity of the materials for Shakespeare's biography. And, after all, as Emerson said, Shakespeare is revealed to us, as far as he can be revealed, in his writings. "Speak, that I may know you," is a grand old saying. The printed page is a mechanical accident. It is the thought, the imagination, the language, purely in themselves, that come from a great writer's brain. And they disclose his essential genius and character far more surely and intimately than any exterior records. All that a biography does is to corroborate in this or that way, or in many ways, the impression which is formed of a great writer by the "judicious reader," as some of the old poets used to say in their prefaces and dedications. We have set biographies of Dickens and Tennyson, and a scattered biography of Thackeray. Very interesting they are, for we all love to read about great men. But what do they amount to in comparison with the total volume of their work? Dickens, Tennyson, and Thackeray live for us in their writings; and Shakespeare lives for us in his writings too. He made a purchase like other men, or gave instructions to his lawyer about a suit, or signed a lease or a will, or arranged the business details of his theatre. All that sort of thing is by the way in the life of a man of genius. Where he is like other men he is very much like them. His distinctive quality alone is individual. What he is like when his genius is aroused into full activity, when his highest emotions are kindled, when his intellect takes its loftiest flights, can only be known from his creations. And to search for this information in biographical records is to seek the living amongst the dead.

Notwithstanding that "unhappily," Mr. Goldwin Smith has a perception of this truth. Instead of investigating municipal records, registers, leases, wills, and inventories, he sees that it is "better worth while to consider under what general influences—social, political, and religious—the life was passed." Accordingly he points out, as a professor of history might be expected to do, that between 1580, when Shakespeare was sixteen, and the time of his death, there were "thirty-six years full of momentous events." The Papal curse against Elizabeth, the Armada, the conflict in France between the League and the Huguenots, the insurrection of Essex, the death of the great English queen, the accession of James, the union of the Crowns of England and Scotland, the Gunpowder Plot, the opening of the struggle between Parliament and the Stuarts, and the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, make a crowded period of history. But was it really these events that moved the mind of Shakespeare? We think not. There was something mightier behind them all. Printing had only recently been invented, America had but lately been discovered, and it had just been ascertained that the world was round, that the sun was the gigantic centre of our planetary system, and that the heavens were strewn with countless other constellations. This was the mighty revolution in human knowledge, and therefore in human thought, which preceded the exercise of Shakespeare's incommensurable genius. It was another instance of the man and the hour. Such a revolution is not likely to occur twice in the history of our planet, and such a genius as Shakespeare may never be born again; almost certainly not in similar conditions, and with the same opportunities. For the first time in the world's history, it was possible to perceive man's true position in the universe. Shakespeare had the amazing intellect, not only to perceive it, but to accept it absolutely in the moral sphere. He took human nature as his province—that human nature which is eternal, and outlasts all dynasties and systems. Banishing the supernatural, except occasionally for mere stagecraft, he brought human nature into the presence of All-Nature; and showed that as the earth shares the movement of the universe, so man shares the life of the earth; and that although his soul is swept by tides of thought and

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passion, those very tides are like the ocean tides in this, that they are under the sovereign sway of absolute and universal law. It was the great principle of moral causation that Shakespeare introduced, established, and illustrated. His Titanic mind rested on the nature of things. Nothing less was adequate to support it. And there, to use his own sublime phrase, he laid great bases for eternity. G. W. Foote.

(To be continued.)

Freethought Propaganda.

We shall soon be able to say, in the words of Jeremiah: "The summer is ended, and we are not saved." But, unlike the case of the ancient prophet, the means of our salvation exist, and we hope to be in a position ere long to avail ourselves more than ever of the secular agencies of human redemption. Notwithstanding the rapid progress of the Freethought movement within the last few decades, there still remains the necessity of further advancement before we shall be free from theological restrictions and priestly interference. The Church still continues its activity in promulgating false and dangerous creeds and dogmas, in striving to stifle the spread and influence of genuine Freethought, and in seeking to nullify the legitimate results of Secular progress. While, as Freethinkers, we have cause to be proud of the many victories already won, we are not oblivious of the fact that the battle with religious error and ecclesiastical domination is not over. The theological serpent is, we believe, fatally wounded, but it still lives, and exercises what little power it has left in the endeavor to strangle social freedom and intellectual liberty. Theology, supported as it is by vested interests, fashion, and centuries of accumulated ignorance, will die hard. The battle, however, between ancient superstition and modern thought is going on in earnest, and Freethinkers mean to continue the fight until complete victory over the foes of human advancement crowns their efforts, for they believe with Byron:—

> Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.

The success which has hitherto attended our efforts in the conflict of truth with error encourages us to be even still more determined in performing our Secular work. We should be only too glad if we could, for the common good, confine our labors to the inculcation of the positive principles of Secularism. But, unfortunately, the time for that has not yet arrived. The tactics of the enemy make it imperative upon us to go on with our destructive policy. If the land were virgin soil, and all the clearing done, we could at once use the plough and bring the soil under proper cultivation, sow seed, and wait hopefully for the harvest. But too much of the ground is already occupied, and the weeds must be removed, for it would be useless to attempt to plough, let alone to sow seed, until a greater clearance than we have up to the present been able to effect has been made. While, therefore, we are ever ready to expound those positive principles which, we believe, would raise the masses of the people from the grovelling and dependent condition to which priestcraft and ignorance have reduced them, we are compelled to face the fact that theological dogmas stand in the way of our enterprise; that the Church does its best to deprive us of a fair opportunity of exercising our undoubted rights in the advocacy of our views; that the clergy are ever active in misrepresenting our teachings; that special efforts are being made at the present time to force Bible reading and religious teaching upon our children in the public schools; and that various forms of superstition, with narrow creeds, mental limitations, and threatenings of cruel penalties, bar the path of progress. These are the obstacles we have to remove in order that we may have a freer scope and a less trammelled course for our constructive work. The truth in religion we respect and would conserve, but whatever interferes with personal rights, intellectual liberty, and ethical culture we declare open and unflinching war against, and regard it as a service to mankind to persistently carry on the conflict to the bitter end. As Secularists, we are opposed to all coercion, to any attempts to enforce uniformity of belief or stereotyped monotony of thought. We want no Procrustes' bed, either of a theological or an intellectual character. Well has it been said of those who strove to bring all men to one way of thinking:—

> Tyrant more cruel than Procrustes old,
> Who to his iron bed by torture fits
> Their nobler part, the souls of suffering wits.

The above has been written with a view of reminding Freethinkers throughout the country of the necessity of supporting the agencies of Secular propaganda now at their command. We are approaching the period of the year when all workers in our movement should be kept busy, and when those who are unable to render service with their tongue or pen should give, according to their means, pecuniary aid, so that the propaganda may be carried on efficiently. Now the agencies at present at our command for Freethought propaganda are four-fold. These are the National Secular Society, the Secular Society, Limited, the Freethought Publishing Company, and the Twentieth Century Fund. All of these, if adequately supported, will be found to be sufficient to enable a comprehensive crusade to be conducted against our common enemy. Once more it should be urged that it is the duty of all Secularists, who have their principles at heart, to assist in this important work. We cannot exert our due influence without mutual help. The very essence of Secularism is co-operated, not isolated, effort. We see members of churches supporting their cause with money and labor. It may be that they expect to be rewarded for their services in another world, which is a very humiliating incentive and a selfish motive. Secularists should be inspired by nobler desires—namely, the realisation here on earth of the beneficial results of their devotion and generosity to their principles. To the honor of our cause, be it said, we have men and women in our ranks who feel a pride in doing what they can to advance the interests of the movement; and the one thing needful is that others should follow their example. It cannot too often be pointed out that if the influence of Secularism be allowed its legitimate scope, if it is not dead as an inspiration to usefulness and benevolence, then every Freethinker should manifest more vigor and courage than do the abject bondsmen of creeds and conventionalities.

While the National Secular Society, with its numerous branches throughout the country, and its many self-denying workers both in London and the provinces, is doing good work in Freethought propaganda, and while the Freethought Publishing Company has supplied a long and pressing want in properly controlling the sale of our literature, the claims of the Secular Society, Limited, should be regarded also as of the greatest importance. It is through the agency of this Society that money can be safely given for Freethought propaganda. Twelve months ago the present writer stated, in the columns of a contemporary, that the establishment of this Society "destroys the baneful effects of the old Blasphemy Laws, and gives ample legal security to any donations or bequests that may be given or left for Secular purposes.....As an old soldier in the cause I ask one and all to be up and doing. The member-list of the Secular Society, Limited, should rapidly increase, inasmuch as the progress of Freethought propaganda depends largely upon the support that is rendered to this Society." This advice, which I now repeat, I have never failed to give since both publicly and privately. It is only through its agency, in my opinion, that any practical provision can be made for the future status of Freethought in this country. It would be gratifying to me to see our wealthy friends provide the means for erecting a Secular Hall in London to be under the control of this legal Society. Such an act would, I think, be far preferable to making any one person its proprietor. A permanent Secular Hall should be for the service of the party in general, and the provisions made for its management should prevent the possibility of our losing it through the action or the death of any individual.

To those friends who desire to immediately aid Freethought propaganda, the Twentieth Century Fund offers an excellent opportunity. The nature and object of this Fund will be seen by reading the *Freethinker*. In the *Morning Leader* of August 1 the following paragraph appeared:—

> "The Wesleyan Conference resumed yesterday at Burslem. Rev. Albert Clayton brought up a report on

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the Twentieth Century Fund, which showed that the sum already in hand was £317,443. The amount promised was 733,313 guineas. They now required 266,687 guineas to complete the fund. Many additional promises were made at the sitting, amounting altogether to 40,062 guineas."

Now, if money can be thus obtained to perpetuate superstition, surely the means to combat its blighting influence ought to be forthcoming from the friends of reason.

I have written thus because forty years' experience in the Secular Movement convinces me that the course here suggested, if adopted, would enhance the usefulness and stability of our cause. I wish with the dawn of the twentieth century to see the Secular Movement placed upon such a basis that our triumphs over error and superstition in the future shall be even greater than those of the past. Undoubtedly our platform is sufficiently broad for all good practical work. Of it we may speak in the words of Pope :—

> Friend, parent, neighbor, first it will embrace ;
> His country next, and next all human race.
> Wide and more wide the overflowing of the mind,
> Take every creature in of every kind.

Charles Watts.

Progress of Secularism.

It is not at all unusual for me, in my wanderings up and down the country, to meet with people who take a gloomy view of the progress of our movement. Young enthusiasts who have awakened to the discovery that the world is not to be saved in a day, old workers who have had their early energies weakened by the slow passing of years, are apt to throw up their hands in despair on discovering that the majority of people, in spite of all that they can do, seem determined to keep to the old roads, and to cherish the old beliefs. If people will not listen and be saved, let them do otherwise and be damned, is the practical conclusion of these people, whose emotions overpower their intellect ; and, adopting the advice of Heine, to allow "every man to go to hell in his own fashion," they are content to remain passive spectators of a contest in which they should be active participants.

At bottom, the cause of this feeling is want of appreciation of the nature of the forces against which all advanced ideas have to fight, or, what amounts to the same thing, non-recognition of the real nature of intellectual development. That man is but a poor judge of human evolution who anticipates that any great and permanent modification of thought is to be brought about in a day or in a generation. There are not many important intellectual movements the clear progress of which can be discerned by those who take part in them. In the animal world there is a fairly constant ratio between the length of the period of gestation and the duration of individual life, and the same law holds with equal strength of intellectual growth. Movements that reach their maturity quickly die out with equal rapidity, and for a very sufficient reason. A principle that does not have to fight hard for its existence enjoys present peace at the price of future life. It is in complete harmony with the existing intellectual state, but it contains no promise for the future ; and in the ceaseless evolution of thought it is soon left behind, a fossil form indicating only one of the mental stages through which the race has passed. It is the slow, imperceptible influences that tell in the long run, as the escarpment of a hill which defies the action of the strongest tempest crumbles away inch by inch under the action of forces too gentle in their operation to compel observation.

It is not by limiting our survey to the few years that comprise our individual experience that we can ever hope to estimate aright the progress of a great movement. To do so is to emulate Mark Twain's attempt to travel down a mountain side on the surface of a glacier. The sound way is to contrast what is with what was fifty or a hundred years ago, and then guage the difference between the two periods. When this is done, I believe it will be found that, bearing in mind the nature of the forces against which we fight, our progress has been simply amazing. The end of the century finds the pulpits ringing with teachings that would, at its commencement, have been denounced as Atheistical. Teachings then dismissed as dangerous are now accepted as strictly conservative. The heresies of the fathers have become the orthodoxies of the sons. People accept in ordinary conversation, read in books or glance casually over in papers, teachings that would have awakened a storm of religious indignation awhile ago. There is almost a competition amongst certain classes of the clergy as to which can, within certain limits, say the severest things concerning the religious beliefs that were held in pre-Darwinian days.

And this general temper rests, to a considerable extent, on specific changes. The century now dying has witnessed the practical destruction, so far as educated people are concerned, of the old claims set up on behalf of the Bible, of belief in prayer, miracles, and special providence. We have seen also the partial disappearance of the old-fashioned "Sabbath," and the development of a movement that will convert Sunday into a real day of rest and of recreation. The right of free thought and free speech has been practically won both legally and morally. And all round these has grown up a tendency to criticise measures and men and opinions more from the standpoint of their practical value in the social economy than from their agreement or disagreement with "revealed" religion.

It is from this point of view that we have to criticise the growth of our movement, not from that of the number of people who are willing to adopt the specific title of Atheist, Secularist, or Agnostic. It need surprise no one that the majority of people have not been in a hurry to call themselves by these names ; the wonder would be were it otherwise. Society is, and always will be, composed largely of people who have no inclination to adopt an opinion at the price of personal discomfort. So long as the holding of any opinion opens one to the infliction of penalties, social or legal, so long the majority of people will shrink from adopting it. This may be a sorrowful conclusion, but it is unfortunately a sound one. All that we can hope for under such conditions is to influence these people by the teachings which they specifically reject. And that this is being done none can reasonably deny. All the apologising inside and outside the church, such movements as the "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon," the attempts of the clergy of all denominations to run more of social subjects into their sermons and less of theology, are all indications of the spread of Secular principles, which, although they may be disowned in name, are yet adopted in practice.

Moreover, it is too often forgotten that it is not the main object of the Secular Society to capture and parade converts on the model of evangelical Christianity, nor to build up a new church on the ruins of the old, with fresh services, hymns, etc. This would mean the establishment of a new sect, with the consequent growth of sectarian feelings, which are equally objectionable wherever they are found. All of these things doubtless have their uses, but they are as instruments of warfare rather than as the main object of the campaign. Our main object is that of the propagation of certain principles, and these, while uniting men in a common bond of interest for common social objects, yet break down the sectarian feelings upon which large organisations are built.

I do not mean, I repeat, that organisation is not necessary. Indeed, it is just now vital to the welfare of our work. We have passed the stage when Secularism can attract by sheer novelty of being. Our work has been done so well that the public at large are tolerably familiar with its general outlines, and this alone renders a good fighting organisation indispensable. What I mean is, that the practical success of our work has to be tested by the spread of the principles we advocate, not by the number of members whose names appear on our books.

Forty years ago the Secular Society stood almost, if not quite, alone in providing instruction and entertainment, free from theology, on Sunday. Now there are scores of other societies carrying on the same work, and we are surely entitled to claim some portion of the credit for this change in the general state of affairs. And all this means, not merely that our ideas are spreading rapidly, but that the multiplication of fresh

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centres of Secular activity is taking a share of the energy that previously flowed in one direction. In one sense, therefore, our work is an attempt to extinguish our own existence. The more powerful the principles of Secularism become, the less need there is for a society to keep their existence prominently before the world.

And this enormous change in public opinion is all the more remarkable when we bear in mind the number of people engaged in the fight and the nature of the forces against which they struggled. In all history there never was a fight that was apparently more hopeless than that waged by the Freethinkers of a century and a half ago against the Christian Churches. It was not a contest of rival sects, where the same feelings and mental characteristics would suit either; it meant a change in the mental horizon of each convert, the growth of a set of entirely new ideas. It was the fight of a handful of men, poor, and lacking social position, against a Church with practically unlimited power and money, and with all the force of fashion to support its claims. The Church could bribe the poor with gifts, it could purchase the support of scholarship by the dual process of founding lucrative chairs and lectureships, and by locking out from professions all who questioned its claims. Nor was this all. To-day it is a tolerably easy thing to advocate heresy. There is still hard work and little pay—the usual accompaniments of holding unpopular opinions; but the men who fought the fight with the halter round their necks, with all the old Blasphemy Laws in active operation, had no public opinion to which they could appeal against their enforcement.

A more hopeless outlook there could hardly have been before any body of men. Yet the Secular cause has seldom lacked strong, resolute fighters, and these men, aye, and women, with nothing but the strength of their cause to spur them on, and fighting the most powerful religious organisations that the world has seen, could yet set on foot a movement which, within the brief space of a century, has been mainly instrumental in destroying many of the harsher features of Christianity, and in so profoundly modifying public opinion that Christians now reject with genuine indignation beliefs for the questioning of which their great grandfathers sent men and women to prison year after year.

We have good reason to be satisfied with the progress of our cause when we contemplate its development from something like a scientific standpoint. That its further progress *might* be greatly accelerated cannot be denied. Indeed, my object in writing this article has been, after showing the groundlessness of the complaints one often hears, to point out how this may be done. And, in a succeeding article, in dealing with the nature of the forces that obstruct our further progress, I hope to make some suggestions on this head.

C. Cohen.

(To be continued.)

Religion Not Morality.

Religion in its development takes on ethical elements. The conception of the deity which any religion offers represents the ethical standards of its adherents. The history of religion makes it clear that the moral attributes of deity are in every case drawn from the ethical ideals prevailing amongst the chief worshippers, and that they have been first constructed in human relations before being ascribed to the gods. The essential truth upon which we are insisting is that the entire history of religion bears clear and emphatic testimony to the fact that all the ethical elements which it contains have been transferred from the human sphere to the divine; they are of earthly warp and woof; they contain man's imperfect ideal of what he ought himself to do and to be. In other words, the ethical elements in religion are due to an immanent, not a transcendent, process of development.

Almost every religion has developed some more or less detailed code of morals which it has imposed upon its adherents as an element in religious obligation. Morality is, therefore, often regarded almost exclusively from a religious point of view, and it is important to distinguish between a theological, or religious, and a scientific treatment of the problem of ethics. A theological system of ethics involves certain pre-suppositions concerning a superhuman order and man's relation to it. In such a system the accepted ethical principles appear as commands, or laws, of the deity or deities. But a scientific treatment of ethics seeks to discover and explain the facts of human conduct as facts of the existing order without regard to their ultimate philosophical interpretation. It seeks to find the sanctions of morality in the natural and inevitable results of the conduct itself, and to establish morality on a rational basis by exhibiting the inescapable consequences of right and wrong action, of good and evil character, as in themselves sufficient grounds for the choice of the one and the avoidance of the other.

In the historical evolution of religion may be distinguished three general stages. The first may be described as a stage of magical and of sacrificial rites. The second stage is that at which emphasis is placed upon creed and dogma, upon a right intellectual attitude towards the deity. The third stage is that in which the emphasis is shifted to morality—to conduct and character.

The powerful and varied influences which religious beliefs have exercised upon conduct in the course of human history cannot receive a detailed discussion. It is clear, however, that these influences have been of a dual nature—partly beneficent and partly baneful. For while heroic souls have again and again quickened their moral life at the altar of religion, the fanatic and the inhuman persecutor have no less surely drawn inspiration from the same source. An "age of faith" is not *ipso facto* an age of morality, nor an "age of doubt" necessarily one of immorality. It all depends upon the kind of faith and of doubt in question. But one should surely be cautious about identifying moral conviction with religious emotion. Examples are never wanting of those who "believe and tremble," and yet boldly play the devil's part in this business of life.

For its theoretical support, for the establishment of those metaphysical beliefs which form the intellectual bases of its faith, religion requires ethics. This order of dependence cannot, from a theoretical point of view, be safely reversed. To assert that in the last analysis morality is dependent upon a belief in a God who "exists as numerically separable from the universe," and in finite souls "eternally and immortally separable from God," is completely to invert the evidence, to place the pyramid of thought on its apex instead of on its base. To insist upon such metaphysical beliefs as the basis of ethical teaching seems to me, not only false in theory, but pernicious in practical tendency. The actual experience of the good life is its own best vindication, as that of the evil is its completest refutation. No view is more shallow than that which sees in morality only a means for securing the blessings of a future life. Nay, more, morality would still remain and its requirements be no less exacting were mankind to reject belief in the transcendent. As Martineau has said: "Did we even imagine that we came out of nothing and went back into nothing, and had ties only with one another, still so long as we are what we are, our life must take form from its own germ, and grow and ramify into moral communities."

—*International Journal of Ethics.*

The King of Death.

How is it known that it was claimed, during the life of Christ, that he had wrought a miracle? And if the claim was made, how is it known that it was not denied? Did the Jews believe that Christ was clothed with miraculous power? Would they have dared to crucify a man who had the power to thrill the dead with life? Is it not wonderful that no one at the trial of Christ said one word about the miracles he had wrought? Nothing about the sick that he had healed, or the dead that he had raised? If Christ had wrought the miracles attributed to him; if he had cured the maimed, the leprous, and the halt; if he had changed the night of blindness into blessed day; if he had wrested from the fleshless hand of avaricious death the stolen jewel of a life, and clothed again with throbbing flesh the pulseless dust, he would have won the love and adoration of mankind. If ever there shall stand upon this earth the king of death, all human knees will touch the ground.—*R. G. Ingersoll.*

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Acid Drops.

The late Lord Russell was first a great advocate and afterwards a great judge. He is also said to have been a great lawyer. But there was a better lawyer than Sir Charles Russell—as he was then called—at the time of the famous Trafalgar Square "riots." The present writer waited on Sir Charles at his office, in company with Mr. Tims, of the Metropolitan Radical Federation. We wanted to know the law with regard to the use and control of the Square. But we really could not obtain it from the great man, nor were we any better off when Sir Horace Davey came to his assistance. They could not make the law clear to us, because they did not understand it themselves. But it was made clear enough to us when we visited Mr. Bradlaugh.

Several weeks later the present writer sat next to Sir Charles Russell on the platform in the hall of the Borough of Hackney Radical Club. Cunninghame Graham, John Burns, and other "fighting" Radicals and Socialists were there, and brave speeches were made in favor of calling another meeting in Trafalgar-square. Sir Charles Russell strongly opposed this policy, and made a resolute speech in favor of sense and sanity. By that time the law was clear enough to everybody—thanks to Mr. Bradlaugh; and Sir Charles contended that what they had to do was to get fresh regulations carried—which, by the way, was done when the Liberals came into power again. When the ruder opponents of his view interrupted him with threatening observations, he replied to them defiantly. One could see that he was not a man to be driven or intimidated.

Mr. T. J. Macnamara contributed to the *Morning Leader* of August 7 an article on "Bible and School," in which he celebrated the "Compromise" of 1871 as a triumph of statesmanship. Under this arrangement, the children in Board schools have the Bible read to them and explained. Well, now, the Bible says that Jesus was born of the Holy Ghost, that his mother was a virgin, and that his nominal father, Joseph, had nothing whatever to do with his introduction on this planet. That is what the Bible says. But a Board-school child being asked, "Who was the father of Jesus?" replied "Joseph," and the answer was allowed to pass in the school, although a rumpus was afterwards raised about it on the Board. Mr. Macnamara also seems to think that the child's answer should pass. Could anything be more illogical? The "Compromise" is simply a burking policy; and is, at bottom, nothing but a Nonconformist dodge.

Wesleyan ministers are great on "temperance," by which they mean the un-Christlike policy of absolute teetotalism. Most of them are ready to stand up and denounce the drink traffic as the greatest curse of the age. But they are afraid, or they do not care, to go further. When the Rev. Thomas Champness introduced his annual resolution at the recent Wesleyan Conference, declaring it to be undesirable that persons engaged in the liquor traffic should be appointed church officers, Dr. Stephenson got an amendment carried by an overwhelming majority. Only nine hands were held up in support of poor Mr. Champness's motion. The fact is, the Wesleyan Church cannot afford to ostracise brewers and publicans.

It appears that the English rabbis are not very partial to the Zionist movement. But what else could be expected? Here in England the Jews enjoy full rights of citizenship; they are in every respect equal with the Gentiles, and often move in what is called the best society. Is it likely, then, that any considerable number of them are going to emigrate to Palestine? What would any of them, except perhaps the very poorest, gain by leaving a country like this and settling down in a country like the old land of their distant forefathers; a land which, as Gibbon sneered, is about the size and of the fertility of Wales?

Mr. Zangwill must have felt this, we imagine, when he remarked at the Zionist Congress the other day that if gold were discovered near Jerusalem there would be a great rush of Jews there, who would soon have to wrest the franchise from the Turks?

The Rev. Dr. Hanson writes to the *Daily News* criticising the views of the Right Hon. Sir George Goldie on China. "The burden of his message to the world," says Dr. Hanson, "is that Christian missions are unnecessary in China, because 'China has as high a code of ethics' as Christendom possesses, and does not require our assistance in the moral domain. We may, he urges, have a good deal to teach China 'in the art of war, in pure science, and in those mechanical and other arts which have developed with such leaps and bounds in the Western World during the nineteenth century.' But, religiously and morally, the Chinese are very good people, and our attempt to introduce Christianity into the Celestial Empire is only waste of time."

To this Dr. Hanson dissents in a letter in which there is a lot of impassioned nonsense about "He is the Light of the World; He is the Lamb of God; He is the Resurrection and the Life"; and so on, which—if Dr. Hanson will forgive us for saying—is simply silly tommy rot.

Sir George Goldie writes, in reply, to the *Daily News*: "I had for years heard it repeated that our troubles in China were due to the manner in which our missionaries preached religion, to their want of tact, and to other cognate causes. I, therefore, felt bound, when asked, to say that, in my opinion, this was not true, and to point out that the real quarrel of the Chinese people is *with Christianity itself;* because this religion, unlike Taoism and Buddhism, is (as Dr. Hanson will doubtless agree) wholly inconsistent with that ancestor-worship on which, for countless centuries, the whole social fabric of Chinese life has been based."

Mr. Baring Gould, in his recently-published work, gives some references to neolithic China. After describing the extraordinary amount of respect for his ancestors, which seems to be the first obligation to a Chinaman, Mr. Baring Gould says: "It is resentment against lack of respect shown to the dead, neglect of duty to the dead, which has provoked the massacre of Christians."

Ambrose Bierce observes: "With reference to some remarks of mine on missionaries a pious correspondent asks if I do not know who was the author of a certain command to go forth into all the earth and preach the gospel—the Christian gospel. No, I do not, nor does he; but I know that it has cost more hundreds of thousands of human lives than it contains words.

Instead of sending missionaries to China and elsewhere, it would be, says a contributor to the *Topical Times*, "in far more excellent taste for certain generous, but meddlesome, busybodies to begin their charities nearer home. I know I am traversing old ground, but, as Heine says, '*Es ist eine alte Geschichte das bleibt sich ewig neu.*' If the money spent on missionaries and mission-houses, etc., for the so-called benefit of the savages of various countries were only expended in a proper and legitimate way amongst the poorest of the poor in the East-end, much crime and unspeakable misery would be averted. 'Wot aggrawates me, Samivel,' said Mr. Weller, shaking his head gravely, 'is to see people wastin' all their time and labor in making clothes for copper-colored people as don't want 'em, and taking no notice of flesh-colored Christians as do.'"

The *Topical Times* further remarks that it would be "quite politic, on England's part, to lessen the raging mania for sending out missionaries—whose mission, by the way, appears more to stir up strife than to bring about peace and goodwill.

> For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight;
> He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

The most intrepid of explorers and keenest of observers, Mary Kingsley, in her *Travels in West Africa*, inveighed strongly against the system of missionary work. It is an entire waste of money, energy, and labor. How much better could these latter be employed in ameliorating the condition of the poor of our great cities.

Chinese converts to Christianity should now hold a prayer meeting (providing there be any left to attend), and tell what the Lord has done for them. He has, at least, removed several thousand believers from a world which, in his wisdom, he did not make a fit place to live in. These Chinese, by their conversion, made enemies of their countrymen, and discovered that the Lord does not protect his own. —*Lucifer.*

According to a *Daily News* special correspondent at Tientsen (Mr. T. C. Cowen), the Chinese imperial gazette—an official organ—says that the troubles are solely due to religious disputes. That is the Chinese view of the matter, and we believe it is thoroughly accurate. It is not true that the Chinese object to trading with foreigners. They are wise enough to know that they benefit by an exchange of commodities. What they object to are the airs and interference of the Christians, who come there for the benefit of their souls, which they think they are quite able to take care of themselves.

An Italian priest, of Troy, New York, has caused a rumpus by saying that King Humbert brought about his own death by his attitude towards the Church. This can only mean that the Church, or God, prompted the assassination.

"Pardon all who did him wrong." This is an extract from a prayer composed by Queen Margherita after the assassination of her husband. We don't suppose, however,

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that it will save the life of Bresci. These pious exercises are not to be read *au pied de lettre*, as the French say.

Father Bannin, rector of the Italian Church, Hatton-garden, London, is reported to have said from the pulpit that regicides should be dealt with by the mob. This is no doubt a very common feeling, but we are surprised to hear it expressed by a Christian preacher. He may be able, for all we know, to reconcile it with his religion; but we defy him to reconcile it with the elementary principles of civilisation, one of which is that trial must always precede sentence and execution.

"Who will protect me?" asked the frightened Archbishop as the Iron Crown of the Lombards was being conveyed from the Cathedral to the Royal Villa. The poor man of God was frightened by the great crowd at the cathedral door, and evidently did not put much faith in the protection of heaven. "Fear nothing, Monsignore; I am here," said the Marquis Benzoni, laying his hand on his sword-hilt. Whereupon the man of God recovered his equanimity.

Cardinal Vaughan recently delivered a discourse at Chester on "Criticism of the Holy See." It was truly Roman Catholic in its intolerant spirit. He spoke of the "intellectual pride and licence of thought which characterize modern society in England." He said that this disintegrating atmosphere penetrates wherever it is not deliberately excluded, and added that, "like many other temptations, it has to be repelled with determination and *even with violence*."

The Cardinal apparently means intellectual "violence" in the individual. But that was not exactly the kind of violence his Church once believed in and practised. There is evidently some bitterness of feeling in the Cardinal's mind over the Dr. St. George Mivart episode, if we read between the lines of the following remarks: "There are Catholics who permit themselves to read and discuss whatever is printed, if only it falls under their notice and is written in an attractive style. In their presumption and ignorance, without careful intellectual training, and without any necessity, they seem to deem themselves a match against the most subtle arguments, and the false presentation or half-presentation of the facts which they have never mastered or even heard. They criticise the conduct of the Holy See as though they had a mission to rescue the government of the Church from failure. These public criticisms and attacks upon the Church by children professing to belong to her are proofs of an un-Catholic and disloyal spirit."

So that there are troubles and dissensions and doubts and difficulties even in this religious haven of rest to which bewildered and storm-tossed sceptics are invited to betake themselves and unburden themselves of Reason, if they would have "Peace, perfect peace."

An Evangelical journal quotes the remarks of "a leading preacher" on "Honest Doubters." He said: "There is a fashion in doubt as there is a fashion in dress. Many men borrow their doubts from their neighbors." If he had said that men borrowed their religion from their neighbors or inherited it from their parents, he would have been nearer the mark. Curiously enough, the same journal publishes in the same issue a sermon by the Rev. Marcus Rainsford, Vicar of St. James's, Holloway, who says, with undoubted truth: "There are numbers in every community who readily assent to the main doctrines of the Bible and of the Church, making no objection, raising no question:—

> As to the Christian creed, if true or false,
> I never question it, but take it as the vulgar do."

These people, says the Rev. Rainsford, are "assenters" and nothing more. He thinks they are even worse than Dissenters.

Elisha the prophet opened the eyes of his blind servant, who saw the whole mountain full of guardian horses and chariots. But the Rev. W. W. Jubb, an American preacher, who has been discoursing in a London Congregational church, says that the horses and chariots may have been seen in a dream, and were perhaps not real, but figurative. Some day or other the clergy will recognise that the Bible is *all* a dream. A good many other people realise it already.

When a parson dies while pronouncing the benediction, or is seized with a fit which terminates fatally, what are we to think of the occurrence? This sudden stroke fell upon the Rev. Charles Burd, vicar of Shirley. Did he displease the Almighty just at that moment? Or was it simply another proof that inside churches, as well as outside them, the laws of nature pursue their inevitable and irresistible course?

"The Church in Cap and Bells" is the heading given by the *Islington Gazette* to a communication from a correspondent signing himsely "Passer-by." It seems that the writer came across, outside the Mission Hall of a well-known Islington church, a prominently exhibited poster, on which were the following lines:—

In the name of the Lord Jesus.

BANK HOLIDAY AROUSEMENT,

Monday, Aug. 6th, at 8 p.m., in this Hall.

CITY POLICEMEN Hon. Sec. and Workers.

WILL WITNESS for CHRIST with SWORD, SONG and Testimony. R. U. KUMIN?

Later in the week he happened to pass the same Mission Hall, where there was another bill. This time it read as follows:—

In the name of the Lord Jesus.

BANK HOLIDAY AROUSEMENT,

Monday, August 6th, at 8 p.m.

SAVED POLICEMEN WILL WITNESS

For CHRIST and Take Part In The

EUROCLYDON OF PRAISE.

EMOC UOY ERUS EB—C? MOVE ON PLEASE.

There are some good, honest, truth-telling, fair dealing men in the police force as well as some unblushing liars and hypocrites. But probably the bulk of the members of the City and Metropolitan forces will feel more than a trifle disgusted at a few of their comrades allowing themselves to be exploited and paraded in this "circus" fashion. The correspondent of the *Islington Gazette*, as an English Churchman, observes that these poster "jokes" may be all very well when "used on behalf of a penny show, but when used to attract people to what is apparently a devotional meeting ——?" He adds some remarks on the use of "vulgar buffoonery" in the supposed interests of religion.

Obviously, the vicar is ill-advised in approving of these clownish announcements. As for the police "buffoons" who contribute to the show, they ought to be decidedly refused the promotion they hope to gain from pious Aldermen and Police Commissioners.

"Why doesn't the working-man go to church?" is still a question with the orthodox. The answer is, in theological terms, that he doesn't care a damn about church.

"A working-man of over thirty-three years' Church membership" writes to the *Record* on the "very serious non-attendance of working-men in our churches." He says: "What man, with any principle of Christianity in him, can go into any of our churches on a Sunday and see the great number of vacant seats and the deplorable absence of working-men without a feeling of humiliation and sorrow at such a shameful sight? The very marked predominance of the female worshippers over the male is quite ten to one. Let us take the East-end of London, that part being a pre-eminent working-man's neighborhood. The churches are capable of accommodating 700 to 1,500 people. But, as a general rule, what number of men do you find at the morning service? My experience tells me about twenty to thirty; at the evening service, at times, as many again. The other parts of London are on a par with the East-end."

Yes, and the answer is still that working-men do not care about church, and no enticements are equal to attracting them to religious establishments in which they are called upon to thank heaven for the "state of life to which it has pleased God to call them."

To what a quaint use at least one of the Church services is put may be gathered from the old wives' practice—and one by no means unique—of retiring to the cellar when a thunderstorm is taking place and reading the service for those at sea. But this is capped by the undertaker who, when his son was seriously ill, read the Burial Service to him by way of consolation.

Undoubtedly Tommy Atkins is devout. He must be so, unless his paid chaplains are terrible liars. We now have a remarkable incident to record which may throw a sidelight on the question. Recently there were three Welsh battalions of Militia training at Milford Haven. On the first Sunday

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136 Wesleyans and other Protestants were marched to a church which is two miles from the camp. When they returned from the service all the men "changed their religion" in order to avoid such a walk! This is the extent of Tommy Atkins's faith.

In the Established Church of Scotland, before the days of popular election, when a minister was "presented" to the parish any parishioner had the right to lodge objections to his settlement. In one case a parishioner, who disliked the use of "the paper," lodged the following three objections to the presentee: First, that he read his sermon; second, that he didn't read it well; and third, that it wasn't worth reading.

Mrs. Conger, the wife of the American Minister in Peking, is, it seems, a Christian Scientist, and her co-religionists—if that is the correct term—maintain that, with their co-operation in America, she quelled the ferocity of the "Boxers" by sheer thinking.

A young and guileless missionary went to Uganda. He speedily found himself in an embarrassing position. A black damsel of very handsome appearance came to visit him, bringing a basket of fruit as a present. The following day she brought another present. This went on day after day for nearly a fortnight. Then the missionary learnt that, according to the native usage, any young woman seeking a husband, and finding a young man to whom she feels drawn, immediately brings him a present, and, if he receives it, she is encouraged to repeat the gift. Each acceptance makes it more certain that she has found favor in the sight of the young man. At the end of a certain time he is expected to propose to her, and she becomes his wife.

"Imagine," says this sucking young dove of a missionary, "my feelings when I realised the undeniable proofs I had given her of my love. With great embarrassment I had to tell her of my ignorance, and to explain that a white man could not possibly marry a black woman. Alas! she saw no reason why this should be so, and went away, I fear, with a heavy heart." He does not say whether they afterwards met, nor—what Exeter Hall would be most anxious to know—whether she was converted.

"There can be no God" was written on a paper clenched in the hand of an unknown woman who poisoned herself at Southwark. Poor woman, she had found the battle of life too hard, and came to the conclusion—arrived at on other grounds by other pepole—that Theistic belief is mere imagination.

It is much to be regretted that Professor Marshall-Hall has eventually been hounded from the Chair of Music at Melbourne University on account of his public expressions of disbelief in Christianity. This contemptible piece of bigotry seems to have been rendered possible only by the casting vote of the Vice-Chancellor of the University. The *Topical Times* remarks: "We suppose now that some brainless mediocrity, with no ideas on anything, least of all on music, but with an infinite capacity for kow-towing to orthodox authority, will be appointed to undo the great work that Marshall-Hall has done in the Colonies. It is a thousand pities; and if Sir Henry Wrixon, and the fearful souls outside the Council who supported him, never regret this stupid heresy-hunt of theirs, we are sure that artistic Australia will have plentiful reason to do so."

"A Priest" writes a letter to the *Church Times* in which he says: "I have often wished that someone with a persuasive pen would write an article upon 'The Conceit of Anglicanism,' for I am sure it is much required." This looks like a suggestion to contributors to the *Freethinker*, though sent to the wrong shop.

This candid Church friend continues: "Bishops, dignitaries, and many others, are constantly trying to impress upon the world how very superior we are to any other part of Christendom, and yet, when one goes about amongst men in this and other countries, one cannot fail to see that there is little to be proud of in the 'religion of Englishmen.' We are thinking a good deal this week of religions being 'known by their fruits,' and it requires very little investigation to see what the fruits are of Catholicism and Protestantism respectively. We have only to look at the Protestant parts of Germany to see how short is the step from Protestantism to infidelity. Or look at those parts of this country which are most under the influence of Protestantism—Wales and Cornwall, the strongholds of so-called Wesleyanism, which, alas! are conspicuous for immorality and untruthfulness."

Talking of clerical conceit, the following little incident which occurred recently seems to be very *apropos*. The clergyman of a small parish in Glamorganshire turned up the other Sunday morning at church very late, having kept the congregation waiting. One of the churchwardens went up to him and mildly remonstrated. The clergyman promptly replied: "What has this to do with you? This is my church." So the men and women of the parish are pondering on the problem.

The *Church Gazette*, in regard to the question, "Why men don't go to church," says: "One of the main reasons which we suspect to be positively driving men away from church is found in the extreme fatuity of the ordinary run of pulpit utterances which prevail ino ur own community. This habit of feeble conventional twaddle and failure to speak so as to touch men's business and bosoms is fatal."

The "Rubaiyat" is popularised in *Scribner* with half-a-dozen quatrains, entitled "How Granny reads her Omar." Here are three:—

Come, now! cheer up an' have a cup o' tea,
Things ain't so hard's you mak' 'em out to be.
Be happy while you can; time ain't so long
But what it soon must end fer you and me.

You nee'n' ter think the worl's a-goin' ter know
About it, when you quit this earth below;
There's several others died sence Time began,
An' likely others will keep doin' so.

'Twont pleasure me ter have you mourn fer me—
I'd rather you'd be happy, as I be;
So when you pass my empty place, jest stop
An' laugh a little laugh fer me to see.

It is suggested that this parody of the sentiments of Omar is satirical. If it be so, it is satire of a very gentle sort as far as Omar is concerned, and of rather a bitter tone as regards the pious rubbish with which poor old women are usually crammed.

The latest achievement of Providence deserves to be placed on record. The *Stroud Journal* publishes two paragraphs relating to Painswick Edge. One refers to anniversary sermons in that locality; the other to a terrific thunderstorm which passed over the district. A resident at Butt Green had a narrow escape of being struck by lightning. He had been sitting near a window, but, as the lightning became more severe, moved away into the room. The next flash struck a Bible placed near the window and shrivelled the covers. The impartiality or the indifference of Providence is more than a little remarkable.

Providence, who has fashioned the locust and planted him on the earth, is probably unaware that in these latter days the locust plague scourges forty millions of the fifty-three millions of square miles of the earth's solid surface. The locust causes more pecuniary loss and misery than a native war, or a series of native wars combined, or, according to Dr. Munroe, "a greater loss both in blood and treasure than a war even between Great Britain and the South African Republics."

So that apparently the evil on the earth does not all originate with man—notwithstanding the doctrine of Original Sin. All the same, he has to fight it, and remove as much of it as he may. Often a weary task, leading to acidulated utterances.

The Gospel tent in the Waulk Mill Field of Morpeth, in which "with increasing fervor" evangelistic services have been held for five weeks, was burned to the ground the other Sunday. The reliance on the Lord was such that the arrangement remained uninsured, though it was a large circular marquee beautifully finished inside and seated with backed wooden seats.

Of course, it may inspire the pious folks, who have received this apparent Providential rebuff, to build a stone structure. True, but what a precious waste of material. And very likely when the people have built a handsome edifice and nicely fitted it up, there may come another fire and burn the whole affair to the ground.

"Meeting in the House of the Lord for worship and prayer" does not assure and exempt the worshippers from meteoric disturbances. A terrific thunderstorm broke over Boston (Lincolnshire) on Sunday evening, and the famous tower of St. Botolph's Church was struck by lightning, a pinnacle from the summit falling a distance of nearly 300 feet into the church below, where the congregation were assembled. The "Dead March" in "Saul," as a tribute to the late Duke of Edinburgh, was being played at the time, the congregation standing. The mass of masonry fell with a crash through the leaden roofing, and a scene of indescribable confusion followed. The worshippers were panic-stricken, women screamed and fainted, the organ ceased playing, and many persons ran hatless out of the various exits. The clergy remained at their posts, and attempted to restore order. The pinnacle fell close to the font, and fortunately no one was injured.

Good old Providence

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A curious accident happened at Bologna the other day. A bell-ringer, while ringing the bells in the campanile of a church, was struck by a great bell in its swing and thrown violently out of the window of the tower. Fortunately he fell in a sitting posture on the roof of the church some fifty feet below, and was only stunned. Shortly recovering, he was able to descend unhurt, and was acclaimed by the crowd which had witnessed his involuntary flight and now called out: "A miracle! a miracle!"

Cleanliness may be next to godliness, but it is not necessarily the same thing. A reporter has been visiting some property belonging to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in the London lums where ice cream is manufactured. He says: "The horrible, unspeakable filth that permeates the district is simply appalling."

The Shah of Persia, like our early Quakers, religiously objects to take off his hat in a Christian church. On his way from St. Petersburg to Paris the Shah stopped at Cologne, and, says the *Daily News*, expressed a wish to see the interior of the famous cathedral. His Grand Vizier was sent to the Ecclesiastical authorities to make the needful arrangements for his master's visit. The Persian Minister was informed that it was the rule of the Church of Cologne, as unchangeable as the laws of the old Medes and Persians, that every visitor, however sublime his position, should uncover his head whilst in the cathedral. "In that case," said the Grand Vizier, "my master will never come." Subsequently, however, it was arranged that all ordinary visitors should be excluded during the Shah's presence, and that he and his ten Ministers should be permitted to inspect the Church of the Three Kings of the East—for such is the dedication of the cathedral—not, indeed, with their ten hats, but with ten small lambswool caps upon their heads. It was casuistically, but very conveniently, determined that this would be no more irreverent than the wearing of a biretta by a priest or of a mitre by the archbishop within the sacred walls.

A strange mishap has occurred at Braintree, in Essex. It is ludicrous in itself, but, from an ecclesiastical point of view, it may have serious consequences. It seems that the Bishop of Colchester was taken round, for consecration purposes, the wrong half of a meadow recently added to the Braintree Cemetery. The ceremony was thus performed on the half belonging to the Nonconformists. It remains to be seen whether the Nonconformists will agree to change their land for the other half. If not, it is suggested that things will be rather awkward.

Dissenters will, unless something is done, receive the great "privilege" of interment in prelatically consecrated ground, to the horror of all true Churchmen. Or, for the sake of deceased Churchmen, the other, and really the Church portion, will have to be consecrated, which, again, will not remove the precious value and importance already conferred on the Nonconformist portion. Is it possible to *un*-consecrate part of a cemetery?

The Churches have, for the most part, tacitly ceased to preach hell-fire. Curiously enough, quite a number of 'sacred edifices" have, during the last year or so, become the prey of fire—*i.e.*, the common or garden "devouring element." Meanwhile Providence, as usual, exhibits absolute indifference. The last conventicle which has been assailed by fire is a church at Westminster. The worshippers, we are told, gave place to firemen, and the outbreak, which began in the nave, was eventually quelled.

The methods of missionaries are indeed about as insane and mischievous as human imbecility could make them. We learn now from an article in the *Nineteenth Century* that a certain Christian mission band at Alexandria has seriously disturbed the confidence in British rule in Egypt. Its secretary has published in Arabic a controversial tract, "Jesus or Mohammed," and forwarded copies to all the mudirs of provinces, principal sheikhs, doctors of the El Azhar University Mosque and others, in wrappers resembling those used by the Government. Much trouble and misunderstanding have ensued. The writer, after citing this as an instance of the indiscretion and unwise methods of zealous English missionaries, mildly observes that the missionary must recognise that he will make hardly any converts at all for the present. "It is as an educator, as a moral force, by his example indirectly influencing the lives of his people, that he can be of use."

This is a pretty fining down of missionary aims and prospects. We can be sure that such a calm and philosophical view will not commend itself either to the sectarian missionaries, who have gone abroad, or to those rabid religionists who have sent them thither. There must be the "beating of the big drum" of our own blessed faith, and an unmeasured denunciation of the ancient beliefs of foreign people upon whom we have chosen to intrude ourselves—or pious subscribers to missions will think their money thrown away.

Wonderful is the conceit of some preachers, fostered, no doubt, by the fulsome flattery of their admirers. Much is made in the recent issue of a religious weekly of a "crush" at Westminster Abbey "to hear Canon Gore." The Canon, no doubt, has a certain popularity, but it can hardly be denied that there were other, and even more potent, attractions to the Abbey. For one thing, it was the August Bank Holiday Sunday, and the major part of the "crush" consisted of visitors to London who came to view the interior of the Abbey. Many of them had probably never heard of Canon Gore, nor heard his sermon, though they were there. Next there was a great and continuous downpour of rain which drove many inside for shelter. Really remarkable, indeed, are the doubtful ways in which some religious journals endeavor to build up a reputation for their favorite preacher.

The danger, from a sanitary point of view, of the collective use of the communion cup at sacramental services has been frequently dwelt upon. Now we learn that in America, to provide against contagious diseases of the mouth and throat, a number of individual cups have been provided at various churches. The cups are of glass, or are silver plated, about two or three inches deep, each holding an individual portion of the wine. These are handed round upon trays or holders of a cruet form, containing usually forty cups in each, secured in sockets.

Here we have the Lord's Supper brought up to date. Medical science has, indeed, progressed from the times of Christ, and taken possession of his followers. But the new idea seems to be more than a little incongruous with the story and design of the Lord's Supper, as anyone may perceive who reads the Gospel narratives. These modern "individual cups" irresistibly remind one of a barber's shop. We have now, it seems, in these latter days become so superfine and so sensitive to possible danger that one Christian brother cannot drink out of a cup after another. Where does the old "loving cup" of some generations ago, and still connected with certain ceremonies, come in?

It would be easy to imagine Jesus Christ regarding with intense scorn—such as that which he is said to have visited on the inwardly unclean Pharisees—these modern so-called "brethren" who worship in his name. Not that there may not be a real danger in drinking from a cup handed from one to another; but when the Lord Jesus Christ is so intimately mixed up with the business, it seems rather cowardly and contemptible on the part of Christians to exhibit any hesitation in following the example which he and his disciples are said to have set.

At last we hear of a real appreciation of "religious books" by Tommy Atkins. It seems that someone at home, acting upon a suggestion made a few months ago, marked a parcel that he addressed to a private of the Coldstreams in South Africa "Religious Books" as being a likely way of ensuring its delivery. The private has written back, "Thanks for the parcel marked 'Religious Books' which contained real Yarmouth red herrings. They went down a treat. Fancy bloaters for breakfast on active service!"

The *Church Gazette* has the following editorial note in its latest issue:—"The *Freethinker* has rescued a valuable utterance from unmerited oblivion. It appears from its last number that the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse lately delivered a discourse in the Wesleyan Chapel of Lowestoft, which was too good to be lost, but which, but for the accidental presence of a 'chiel takin' notes' on behalf of that journal, would never have reached the public ear. It is incomprehensible to us why Mr. Pearse should not desire publicity, and no less so why the *Freethinker* should volunteer to confer it upon him. But that is their business."

Well, if the advanced views which were reported are familiar and acceptable to the *Church Gazette*, being, as it were, mere elementary ideas, they are not so to vast numbers of Christians. Hence the preacher's apprehension in regard to publicity, and our generous gift of space.

Recently a caustic letter appeared in the *Daily News* on "clerical headmasters." There is much to be said which is not favorable as to the methods and performances of clerics who thus duplicate their offices. The writer of the letter pertinently observes that the "school pulpit" which these clerical pedagogues profess to think the chief part of the school is often "degraded to the utterance of platitudes or cant."

Of the making of new religious sects there is no end. The more absurd they are, the quicker seems to be their growth. We now hear of an American sect calling themselves "Faithists in Jehovah." It has sprung up not inopportunely, for most folks of intelligence and culture have now practically abandoned any faith in the tribal god of the Old Testament. But the "Faithists" have some scriptures of their own called "Oahspe." This book they believe to have been written by some sort of inspiration through the hands of a New York dentist in 1881.

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N. B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stonecutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

To Correspondents.

Mr. Charles Watts's Engagements.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

A good deal of matter has to stand over till next week in consequence of the editor's absence from London. He will be back in the editorial chair in time to supervise the next issue of this journal. Meanwhile a call is made upon the indulgence of correspondents and other persons.

A. L. Wilkinson.—Mr. Foote will deal with the point in the course of his criticism of Mr. Goldwin Smith's volume. There is evidently room for a book on Shakespeare from a Freethought standpoint, and Mr. Foote has for some time had an idea of writing it. He has at least one qualification for the task—an intimate knowledge of Shakespeare's works, and a good acquaintance with the most important things that have been written about them.

C. Newell.—Your suggestion shall be considered. Pleased to hear from a Freethinker of sixty years' standing. Acknowledgments for the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund will be made next week.

W. H. M.—The words in the second column that are enclosed in brackets are editorial, and are intended to draw the readers' attention to the contradiction in the two texts. The "third day" can only mean the third day after the baptism.

J. W. Barks.—Received. In our next.

F. E. Willis.—Handed to the secretary as desired. Thanks for the cuttings.

W. P. Adamson.—Too late for criticism in our present issue. Will deal with it next week.

James McGhee.—(1) Sorry we are unable to give the address of "an intelligent elder of the Peculiar People." (2) Nor do we know of any special book on non-Catholic shrines. (3) Mr. Ward was quite right. Tyndall proposed that the ward devoted to testing the efficacy of prayer should be treated, as far as doctoring and nursing are concerned, precisely like other wards. That was a necessary condition, in order to see whether praying for the patients made any difference in regard to their recovery.

T. K. Holmes, Temple of the Muses, Lancaster, thinks it would be a very good thing to publish a list of newsagents who sell the *Freethinker*, and will be happy to have his own name included. "I not only sell the paper," he says, "but I read it and appreciate it, and push its circulation with all my might." This correspondent is hereby informed that Mr. Foote's *Prisoner for Blasphemy* has long been out of print; also that the Sunday Act of Charles II. does not contain the clause he supposes.

J. Y.—Shall appear.

A. Nugent.—You must expect to find plenty of superstition in a country like Ireland. Thanks for your letter.

Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—H. L., £1; L. Simpson, 5s.; W. Lamb, 10s.

A. Hallam.—The articles by Mr. Neale on "Brother Prince," and his "Agapemone, or Abode of Love," appeared in our issues for January 29 and February 5, 1899.

Miss Vance would be glad if any readers, having spare copies of the *Freethinker* for September 10, 1899, would communicate with her.

Kangaroo.—We are glad to know that our old friend, Jos. Symes, is well and active, notwithstanding the attempt of the bigots to kill him, and that he is starting on a lecturing tour in New Zealand.

Received.—Blue Grass Blade—Friedenker—Glasgow Evening News—Nottingham Evening Post—Morning Leader—Crescent—Torch of Reason—Two Worlds—Secular Thought—Boston Investigator—Hereford Times—Stroud Journal—Birmingham Daily Gazette—Truthseeker (New York)—Public Opinion—Islington Gazette—Manchester Sunday Chronicle—Morpeth Herald—Melbourne Liberator—La Petite République—People's Newspaper.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

Lecture Notices must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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Scale of Advertisements:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

The Freethought Demonstration, which will take place to-day in Victoria Park, at the usual meeting-place of the Branch of the National Secular Society, will commence at 6.30 p.m. instead of 7 p.m. as previously announced. The speakers will be Messrs. G. W. Foote, C. Watts, Cohen, A. B. Moss, and Heaford. It is particularly hoped that there will be a large and early attendance of Freethinkers.

The Annual Children's Excursion, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place on Saturday, September 1. Brakes will convey the youngsters to Underhill Farm, New Barnet, where provision will be made for their entertainment. Application for free tickets should be made to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C. Subscriptions towards the expenses of this function should also be sent to her at the same address. We hope the London Freethinkers will not forget to support this effort to give the children a first-rate holiday. All the *work* will be done gratuitously—and gladly; but brakes, bread and butter, buns, cake, milk, lemonade, and prizes cost money, which the workers can hardly be expected to contribute all by themselves.

The subscriptions for the excursion already to hand include: Mr. George Anderson, £3 3s.; Mrs. Marks, 5s. Next week we hope to have the pleasure of announcing considerably more. Miss Vance wishes it to be known that it is not proposed to take children under five or over fourteen years of age, and the tickets are to be obtained from her.

Mr. H. Percy Ward's excellent letter, printed in the Birmingham *Daily Gazette*, has neatly pricked the bubble of the new religious instruction policy of the "Liberal Eight"—representing the non-Church Christians of the Midland metropolis. We are glad to see the "Secularist View" so ably presented in the local press.

Reynolds's Newspaper writes as follows of the new edition of the *Bible Handbook*:—"This is a volume which we strongly commend to all interested in the study of the Judaic-Christian Scriptures. It is edited by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball, and published by the Freethought Publishing Company, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C., price 1s. 6d. Indeed, we cannot conceive any Christian as having a faith worth regarding unless he has studied this remarkable volume. Teachers in Sunday and elementary schools will find it of special value as an aid to the exposition of the Christian religion from a thoughtful and critical standpoint. It is a perfect army of facts and comparisons. Since 1888 it has been the standard volume of the subject with which it deals, and its popularity is emphasised by the fact that the public have demanded a new edition."

A complete list of promised donations to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund will be published in next week's *Freethinker*. Mr. Foote finds it impossible to publish a complete list this week, as at the time of going to press he is still absent from London; and it seems better to postpone the list altogether than to print a partial one which may cause dissatisfaction.

Those who intend to subscribe to this Twentieth Century Fund should lose no time in communicating with Mr. Foote. Next week's list ought to be both long and strong.

Readers of the *Freethinker* are desired to bear in mind that the first week in October is a "Shilling Week." During that period we expect to receive at least one shilling from hundreds (why not thousands?) of Freethinkers throughout the kingdom towards the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. We do not mean that subscribers are to be limited to one shilling. They are free to send us any number of shillings. The more the better. We mean that one shilling is the minimum. The maximum will be the largest number of shillings sent us by a single subscriber. Everyone's gift will be separately acknowledged in our columns.

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A Seaside Sermon.

ON that popular holiday height, Douglas Head, in the Isle of Man, the Ven. Archdeacon Madden preached a sermon the other Sunday, and notes of it have since been published. He does not seem to have "improved the occasion," except for unbelieving folk, who, having heard or read his discourse, can hardly fail to be confirmed in their unbelief. When *will* preachers realise that vapid commonplaces, unwarranted assumptions, a lot of scrappy texts, and a great deal of nauseating nonsense about Jesus and his blood, do *not* constitute a discourse equal to the intellect, taste, or sentiments of even the average man?

Somehow preachers, especially of the Anglican Church, seem incapable of learning or moving with the times. The same dry old sermons which used to send our forefathers to sleep in their high-topped pews are thought good enough—without even the pretence of hashing up—for modern hearers, who may well turn away with disgust mentally, though perhaps forced out of decency's sake to remain in person till the preacher is pleased to wind up with those ever-blessed words: "And now to God the Father," etc.

This seaside sermon of the Ven. Archdeacon Madden seems to have been one of that numerous class of inflictions. Not even the invigorating breezes which fan the beautiful Manx island at every point, and at none more than on Douglas Head, seem to have swept the old cobwebs out of his brain, and inspired him to a little exhilarating effort. The probability is that he "prepared" his address far away, and delivered it perfunctorily and inartistically, as most of these cut-and-dried discourses are pitched at the heads of harmless people who have done nothing to deserve any punishment of the kind.

He commenced with a text, of course. What a notable innovation it would be if some high Church dignitary would start the fashion of preaching without a text. Often the so-called text turns out to be a little disjointed phrase which frequently has no real bearing on the main subject of the discourse. Though sometimes one has observed that the text and a conscientious notion of sticking to it, and repeating it from time to time with damnable iteration, has spoiled what might have been otherwise a fairly interesting sermon.

The Venerable Archdeacon's text was from Matthew xi., "Rest unto your souls." It will be seen that this text or motto has a vague bearing upon the occasion—namely, the gathering of a holiday crowd. But then it is a little too much to assume that the crowd were upon Douglas Head and in the Isle of Man to rest their *souls*. They have all eternity to do that in—in one place or another. They were there to rest, recruit, and reinvigorate their bodies and their brains too, which latter theologians will not admit to be functionally identical with the soul. The Ven. Archdeacon was willing to admit that his hearers had "come from warehouse and factory, from shop and store, from office and mart, to seek rest and refreshment for their bodies." Quite so, a sufficiently sensible remark; but then, of course, we must be immediately told that "the body is sanctified and made sacred by the Incarnation and by the blessed hope of the Resurrection." We can imagine the solemn tones in which this piece of godly nonsense would be uttered. "Sanctified and made sacred by the Incarnation."

What an awful, wretched, absolutely hideous perversion of the facts of science, history, and plain common sense to say that our bodies are "sanctified and made sacred" by the tradition that a Nazarene carpenter was nailed to a cross for some offence of which the tribunal of his place and time adjudged him, rightly or wrongly, guilty! Our bodies have been "sanctified and made sacred"—if the terms are not still misapplied—by a prolonged martyrdom to the forces of nature and environment which commenced incalculable eras before the appearance of this much-belauded and sadly overrated person, who, in spite of all pious protestations to the contrary, contributed very little or anything to our development.

And then, according to this Ven. Archdeacon on Douglas Head, these same bodies are sanctified and made sacred by the blessed hope of resurrection. But how are these bodies *to be* resurrected? How are all the scattered fragments, long dissolved into dust and scattered to the winds and absorbed into other bodies, to be gathered and invested with their original individuality? Not to pursue this point, we notice that the Ven. Archdeacon goes on to say that "increase of insanity is undoubtedly due to overworked brains." Insanity is undoubtedly due, in a large measure, to religious delusion, and it may even be, in a few cases, to the heroic resistance of religious persecution—and there the primary cause is still religion.

"But I am present to-day, not to address you on rest for body and brain, but on rest for your soul." The Ven. Archdeacon, solicitous for the Church of Christ—the augmentation of which means a great deal to all ministers of the Gospel in more ways than one—fears that "many here are haunted with a sense of unrest—suffer from a lack of peace—in their souls." There might be a few, of course, who are so disturbed, but no one would think it, if they watched the bulk of the holiday visitors, when released from the ministerial voice, as boys from school. The round of amusements in the island, as elsewhere at seaside resorts, find, and have always found, so much patronage, have been entered into with so much gaiety and gusto, are so universally regarded as the main object of life for the time, that the Archdeacon's fears must strike everyone as more than a little unfounded. Without doubt—allowing for a few exceptional instances—they originate and are confined very much to himself and others of the clerical and ministerial profession who, like pushing tradesmen and vendors of patent medicines, think that the wants of mankind are such that it is impossible for folks to live without patronising their wares.

It seems idle to pursue this seaside sermon further, with all its talk about "Jesus who hung on the cross for *you*," which, being interpreted, means for *us* ("the bishops, clergy, and ministers of all denominations," according to the old toast at public banquets, now largely discarded). But there is a pretty little verse which was recited on Douglas Head by the Ven. Archdeacon, which is not to be commended for its poetic elegance or its accordance with solid facts, but which is rather comical. This is it, and it may be given without further comment as an expression of the maudlin piety of folks who have never troubled to make any inquiry into the foundations of their faith, but rely on the old explanation, "Mother told me so!"—

> "I came to Jesus as I was,
> Weary and worn and sad,
> I found in Him a resting-place,
> And he has made me glad."

Well, it does not require much to make some people glad. This fact is especially observable in children. But how the Gospel narratives, which are the only record of Jesus that we have, can make any person glad is quite beyond ordinary comprehension.

FRANCIS NEALE.

A Future Life.

THE great majority of mankind think that a belief in future existence is absolutely necessary to present happiness. We believe the doctrine to be a mistake. Time a thousand years hence is no more to us now than time a thousand years past. As no event could have harmed us when we existed not, so no event can possibly harm us when we are no more. By anticipating and calculating too much on future felicity, and dreading, or at least fearing, future misery, man often loses sight of present enjoyments and neglects present duties. When men shall discover that nothing can be known beyond this life, and that there is no rational ground for any such belief, they will begin to think more of improving the condition of the human species. Their whole thoughts will then be turned upon what man has done, and what he can still do, for the benefit of man. As they will be delivered from all fear of invisible voluntary agents that may do them harm, so they will no longer look up to such agents for help, but they will study more their own powers and the powers and properties of nature. They will discover how much time and labor are spent entirely uselessly, and worse than uselessly—perniciously; that so far from improving the condition of man, such labors only tend to destroy his own peace and render him an enemy to his fellow-man.

—"*Occasional Thoughts*," *by Horace Seaver.*

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The Bible and a Future Life.

From a Letter to the Clergy.

"I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not yet seen the evil work that is done under the sun" (Eccles. iv. 2, 3). This is rank pessimism, no doubt; but, as the Holy Ghost inspired it, you will not blame me for it, I presume. A man comes with nothing, and "in all points, as he came, so shall he go" (v. 16). A man's portion, lot, or fortune is to enjoy what he may in life (18). All go to one place (vi. 6), yet *you* pretend there are three places, at least, heaven, hell, and purgatory! "I commended mirth," says the Holy Ghost, through this writer, "because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry," etc. (viii. 15). Here is another text: "All *things come* alike to all: *there is* one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as *is* the good, so *is* the sinner; *and* he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath. This *is* an evil among all *things* that are done under the sun, that *there is* one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness *is* in their heart while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any *thing* that is done under the sun. Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity; for that *is* thy portion in *this* life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race *is* not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding; nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all" (Eccles. x. 2-11).

This is tolerably plain language, gentlemen. The righteous are no better off than the wicked, the pious than the profane; there is the same event to all. The dead positively know nothing; there is no reward for them; their very sentiments, good and evil, have perished; therefore, live as fully as thou mayst, for thou goest to sheol, the grave, the state of the dead; and in that state work is impossible, for there can be no plan laid out, there is no knowledge, there is no skill. All this is the exact reverse of what you are paid so well to teach and preach. Why do you not show people what your Bible contains? and why do you explain away and befog what the Bible so explicitly declares? Lawyers are bad enough; but not half so bad as you, not half so uncandid. In the ninth verse, I must note, the translators have stuck *this* before life: *this* life—a dodge intended to suggest that the writer really expected another life. This is piety, but extremely dishonest.

Perhaps you will point to Ecclesiastes xii. 1 as showing that the writer was quite orthodox (also the Holy Ghost who prompted him, of course); but I have a word to say upon that passage: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these *things* God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity..... Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Eccles. xi. 9, 10; xii. 1).

"Creator," says the Authorised Version; but the Hebrew word never means that, and is both plural and feminine too! It may mean "thy fruitful ones," thy prolific females, wives, or concubines. That is probably the sense, and the following verses give an enormous weight of evidence to that view. Remember thy fruitful ones while fruitfulness is possible, ere the barrenness and dryness of old age shall come, when both pleasure and gain shall be at an end.

The writer evidently had some vague belief in a God (what his God was I know not, any more than you know what yours is), but he clearly and emphatically denies the future life, as regards both men and beasts; and, of course, what he wrote the Holy Ghost inspired; and thus shows us that *he* denied the future life at that time, whatever change of views his unchangeableness underwent in later ages. To be sure, the god of every sect changes his views just as his worshippers change theirs. There is, I presume, no remedy for that, and you must endure it. Still, the fact is instructive—and amusing.

Having noticed its positive denials of a future life, we may turn to the Bible texts usually adduced on the other side. It is said that Jesus "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." And many very sincere believers have been duped by you and your predecessors into the belief that Jesus really shed some light upon that subject, and imparted to man views and notions of future life such as never had been current before. Of course, by this time you must be well aware that Jesus said very little upon the subject, that what he did say is extremely vague and unsatisfactory, and in no respect an advance upon what the Pagans believed long before. The text I have partially quoted will afford us a little insight into the state of mind of that typical Christian who wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy. He speaks of Christ, and says, "Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light," etc. (2 Tim. i. 10). This reminds one naturally of John xi. 25, 26, where Jesus so shamelessly imposes upon poor Martha. He told her he was the resurrection and the life; that those who believed on him, though dead, should live; and that the living who believed on him should never die. To the Jews he had spouted the same rabid nonsense before.

We learn from this that the gospel taught the abolition of death and revealed life and incorruptibility, as the Revised Version renders it. The two allegations or promises stand or fall together. That Christ did not abolish death, that death is as prevalent as ever, needs no proof. Even your effrontery is not capable of denying that, I presume. Even your most submissive dupes would be apt to stare were you to tell them death had been abolished. But, if we cannot accept the former allegation, neither can we the latter. The dream that death was abolished was a mere dream, and the dream of immortality or incorruptibility is equally a dream.

But we will look to see what light Jesus or his gospel did shed upon this immortality question, and how much he advanced beyond the Pagans in this particular. In Matthew v. 12 he says to certain characters. "Great is your reward in heaven." The word "heaven" (*ouranos*) occurs very frequently in the New Testament, as well as in the Septuagint. We know very well how the Hebrews and Jesus blundered in their cosmology. To them the earth was flat, though diversified by hills and valleys; and over the earth was a roof or ceiling, the firmament or heaven. Heaven was up above the earth they trod upon, and beneath the earth was Hell, Gehenna, Hades, Tartarus, etc. In heaven above dwelt God and his angels; from it Jesus assured his dupes (and his foes) that he descended (though whether before his birth or after he does not explain). He brags to poor bewildered Nicodemus of his knowledge of heavenly things; and Paul babbles childish nonsense about bodies terrestrial and bodies celestial, and, full of divine learning, informs us that the glory of the celestial differs from that of the terrestrial. To say all in one sentence, it would be impossible to teach more absolute nonsense about the earth and the sky than is taught in the Old and New Testaments; and this absolute nonsense forms the substance of what the Bible says of the future life. As far as we are able to track and test the book, we find it hopelessly and absolutely wrong in its statements and references to the physical universe. And we can but conclude that it is no better in what it says of the future life.

Add to this that other wretched blunder—namely,

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that death is the "wages of sin"; that "by sin death entered into the world," etc., and we see that no reliance whatsoever can be placed in what the Bible says respecting a future life. It is inconceivable that men who could write the nonsense about Elijah going to heaven in a whirlwind, of Jesus coming down from heaven and rising thereto again, could have *known* anything about a future life. Those who wrote of the Gods on Olympus, and descents therefrom and ascents thereto, could give us as much information about the future life as did Jesus and his apostles.

Besides, as we shall see, what the New Testament really says upon the subject is extremely scrappy and indefinite; so much so, that all of you together cannot tell us the locality of heaven, hell, or purgatory, or the direction to take for them; you do not know whether bodies are there or not; you know not whether any of the dead have yet reached their destination, or ever will; you know not how they spend their time; you know not a single particular about them. In a word, all that you *do know* would make you ashamed to make money by preaching of heaven, hell, purgatory, and human immortality, if you were honest men. I am not sanguine enough to hope that Freethinkers will convert you to honest courses, but we are doing, and shall continue to do, what will make priests and parsons impossible in the future. Jos. Symes.

The Truth About China.

The real authors of this blackest page in modern history [the Chinese insurrection] are the missionaries. It is to be hoped they are proud of their work. Whether they are not, it is the last work they are likely to do in China for a good long time. In all Christendom there is not a Government that will dare to encourage these infatuated men and women to resume their horrible work. They would need encouragement, and a lot of it, to persuade them again into the field to gather the harvest of Asiatic souls. We hear a good deal about their "heroism" and "devotion," but all that is now a pricked bubble. They have shown no such qualities. Apparently the crown of martyrdom is a headgear which they are nowise desirous to wear. None than they are more clamorous for protection when menaced; none as they so loudly invoke the military arm. Time was when they who went abroad to preach the gospel to the benighted accepted martyrdom with avidity. Their reliance was on God; he was their refuge; if he failed them they said: "Thy will be done," and died in harness, praising him. But these modern missionaries put their faith in legations and gunboats. They have, in this instance, leant upon a broken reed, and for weeks the poor-spirited creatures have been scampering to the seacoast like frighted rats, and pickling their shins in the brine to hail the passing ships. They have had more than enough of the missionary business—a veritable bellyful of it. Pitiful to relate, their poor "converts," mostly women and children, have been slain by thousands. Doubtless these holy men are capable of rejoicing in the thought that they converted the wretched victims just in the nick of time to save their souls; but, doubtless, too, they will be a deal older than they now are before they care to undertake the salvation of any more. —*Ambrose Bierce.*

Lord, Have Mercy!

An old man in Georgia named Jack Baldwin, having lost his hat in an old, dry well one day, hitched a rope to a stump and let himself down. As the story is told by the *Atlanta Journal*, a wicked wag named Neal came along just then, and, quietly detaching a bell from Baldwin's old blind horse, approached the well, bell in hand, and began to ting-a-ling. Jack thought the old horse was coming, and said: "Hang the old blind horse; he's coming this way, sure, and he ain't got no more sense than to fall in on me—whoa, Ball!" The sound came closer. "Great Jerusalem! The old blind fool will be right on top of me in a minit—whoa, Ball—whoa, Ball!" Neal kicked a little dirt on Jack's head, and Jack began to pray: "Oh, Lord, have mercy on—whoa, Ball!—a poor sinner—; I'm gone now—whoa, Ball!—Our father who art in—whoa, Ball!—hallowed be thy—gee, Ball, gee! what'll I do?—name. Now I lay me down to sl—gee, Ball! [Just then in fell more dirt.] Oh, Lord, if you ever intended to do anything for me—back, Ball! whoa!—thy kingdom come—gee, Ball! Oh, Lord, you know I was baptised in Smith's mill-dam—whoa, Ball! ho! up! murder!" Neal could hold in no longer, and shouted a laugh which might have been heard two miles, which was as far as Jack chased him when he got out.

Physical Education of the Young.

The above subject is receiving, at the present time, a good deal of attention in many quarters, and a few words from a Freethinker's point of view may not be out of place.

The mental development of the children has received its full share of attention for many years past, and many people have stated that this is the only means of putting the coming generation on a level footing with that of other countries. But a clever brain is of little consequence without a healthy constitution to back it up, and there is no doubt that the physical welfare of our children has been sadly neglected. "Secular education" in the schools has been the cause of a good deal of controversy during the last few years, and will doubtless be the cause of more again this year at the coming election; and I would advocate that this subject of physical education be incorporated with it. Many hours every week (sometimes a whole week) are wasted in our schools with "Scripture lessons." I say *wasted* because no possible good can come of them; for, if the teachings of the Bible were true, they are far above the understanding of the average school-boy or girl, and many of them too difficult for the Archbishop of Canterbury to understand himself.

The Church has set itself against Secular education, naturally; but it seems surprising that they should be averse to physical education. But this they have been for years, as they also have been against every other "forward" movement. This is probably due to an instinct handed down from the religion of the East, where even at the present day they look upon their bodies as an enemy of man's spiritual welfare. The contempt for the body, in fact, is the very core of Eastern metaphysics and of many Eastern religions. "The Eastern Yogis," we are told, "wear a large iron ring round their necks, which prevents them from lying down to sleep at ease." "Some hang for an incredible length of time with their heads down."

Although these things appear as "absurd nonsense" to anyone of sound mind, yet they actually have some effect in England.

The following I cut from a paper about twelve months ago: "At the last meeting of the school governors Mr. —— rose and made a bitter speech against the grant for the gymnasium. He based his chief argument upon scriptural grounds." "Scripture told them," he said, "to 'mortify the flesh.' Was this the way to do it? He did not believe in spending money on this new-fangled idea of physical training."

The "Scripture reading" and "religious teaching" have received far more attention than it deserves in our Board schools; while, on the other hand, the physical welfare of the children has been neglected. What we want is that every child attending our schools, from the age of five to fourteen, shall receive a proper course of physical instruction, which will develop his or her body, and make it healthy.

The struggle to keep apace with other countries in the race for existence is becoming keener every year we live, and a brain that is clever and full of business principles is no good without a healthy body to provide it with the necessary working material. Our school children must receive a better physical training than has been the case of late. School is the proper place for them to receive it, and the time at present devoted to religious teaching would be more profitably employed in this cause. X.

The Atheist's Grave.

I wandered among the churchyard's dead
On a sunny Sabbath day,
And I marked a grave where the sexton said
An Atheist's ashes lay.

A headstone pointed the lowly spot,
Inscribed with his age and name,
But other memorial there was not
To draw either praise or blame.

Yet the daisy there was as fresh in its hue,
The elm did as light wave,
And the springtide grass as greenly grew
As over the Christian's grave.

And I marked that the sunbeams through the trees
Fell as lightly on the sod
As if its inmate had been of these
Who had lived in the faith of a God.

And over my mind the reflection came
Of a new and startling kind,
'Twas whispered within me that man may blame
Where nature no fault can find.

The bigot's curse from the Gothic pile
On the sceptical few may fall,
But Nature extends, with a mother's smile,
Her pity and love to all.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

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Correspondence.

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I must confess that I feel astonished that "Chilperic" so strangely misunderstands my position as to assert that I assure people that the adherents of "Objectionable Religion" are the *only* people who attempt to further the good of others, and that the opponents of "Objectionable Religion" are destitute of moral emotions, conscience, faith in high principles, etc. I have never taught any such monstrous doctrine. I honor and admire the good work done by many brave men and women who have objected to the word "religion." My own "hero-worship" glorifies the heroes and martyrs of Freethought quite independently of so relatively trivial a consideration as their use or disuse of a particular word.

So far from having asserted or argued that "Chilperic" and his supporters are without "faith" and "conscience," I have maintained the exact contrary. I merely pointed out that it is *they* who object to these words, and *not I*. I inserted words (such as "honest men," an assertion that such moral destitution was of course "impossible," and so forth) in order to show clearly and unmistakably that I myself believed and affirmed the exact opposite of their being faithless and unconscientious. I have *not* charged them "with the usual theological list of bad qualities." I have *not* suggested that Secular Religionists are "the only Secularists who have any spark of virtue left in them at all."

Similarly in other matters "Chilperic" leaps to conclusions which appear to me to be of a most extravagant and illogical character—as when he makes "figurative" language the equivalent of "meaningless" language. It is perfectly true that I said that language was "more or less figurative, poetic, metaphorical," etc.; but if such qualities rendered language "meaningless," then large portions of Shakespeare's works would be destitute of meaning, whereas critics generally find that such portions are unusually *full* of meaning. If a man has used a word (say "cycle," or "secular," or "liberal," or "religion," or what not) in a new or unusual sense, I really cannot agree that he has thereby been guilty of "denying that words had any meaning," or of reducing all the language he employs to so many thousands of "meaningless words."

Repeating once more a misleading statement which I previously passed by to save time, "Chilperic" says: "We are furthermore assured by the same gentleman that it is irrelevant to mention the crimes and atrocities which have always been associated with religion." What I said (see *Freethinker* for June 3, p. 349) was that *the paragraph* concerning religious crimes was *either* irrelevant *or unfair*. The paragraph contained more than the mere "mention" of religious crimes, insomuch that I had to meet it by arguing that it was as unfair to associate such crimes with the kind of religion advocated by Mr. Gould as it would be if he were to retaliate by identifying all secular crime with Secularism.

I had better correct one or two other inaccuracies while I am about it.

I have not excluded pure Buddhism, Shamanism, etc., from the list of religions, but only argued that "Chilperic's" definition was highly disputable *because* it thus excluded them—this conflict of opinion illustrating the difficulty of agreeing upon a single rigidly-fixed definition for the word "religion."

I have *not* said that "the opponents of O. R. are flippant." My remark about "means which appear to them [Secular Religionists] to savor of flippancy" obviously referred to "Chilperic's" letters, and to these alone.

I have felt compelled to write thus far in order to justify myself against misrepresentation. But as this dispute engenders friction, misunderstanding, and an endless crop of side issues, and as my main object has, I trust, been sufficiently attained, I desire to close my own share in the controversy as soon as I can do so without discourtesy to either of my opponents. W. P. BALL.

"CHRISTIAN FALSEHOODS."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue dated July 15 Mr. Cohen asks this question: "In what debate would a man like the Rev. Dr. Horton have ventured to tell a deliberate falsehood concerning the religious opinions of Mill, Dr. Clifford to have ranked Darwin as a 'typical Christian leader,' or Dean Farrar to give four references, for statements concerning the character of Roman women, three of which had absolutely no existence outside his own heated imagination?" I ventured to ask for the names of the works containing these "falsehoods," and in a subsequent issue (July 29) Mr. Cohen gives his "authorities," upon which I beg to offer a few observations:—

(1) Dean Farrar's statement, in his *Early Days of Christianity*, has reference to "noble Roman matrons," and is to the effect that they "counted the years not by the consuls, but by their discarded or discarding husbands." The authorities he cites are Seneca, Tertullian, Tacitus, and Suetonius. It is perfectly true that these writers do not all use the same words, and, doubtless, it never occurred to Dean Farrar, for one moment, that anyone would entertain the notion that they did. One reference (Seneca) contains *the fact*. This Mr. Cohen admitted, as he was bound to do. And Suetonius, thirty-six (not thirty-four), fully confirms what Seneca wrote regarding their moral (or immoral) character. The other citations are pointed out (as is common in histories) as having a bearing on the general subject. Where, then, I ask, do the "heated imagination" and the "manufacturing" of references come in? Not with Dean Farrar, I think.

(2) Dr. Horton, says Mr. Cohen, has told a "deliberate falsehood" concerning the opinions of J. S. Mill. The name of the work containing that "falsehood" I asked for, and the reply is: "Mr. Horton is reported as saying....." But surely no man has a right to charge another with uttering a "*deliberate falsehood*" simply and solely because he is "reported"? Before making such a grave accusation, Mr. Cohen should, at least, have ascertained if the "report" of the sermon had been revised by the rev. gentleman, and appeared with his knowledge and sanction.

(3) Dr. Clifford has "ranked" Darwin as a "typical Christian leader," writes Mr. Cohen, and to this he objects. Well, to deal with Darwin's religious views in this letter is hardly possible, for an obvious reason; but what the Doctor has said, in his published addresses (*Typical Christian Leaders*), will bear full and honest criticism.

I venture to add that to use violent language, and to accuse men of "mental obliquity," on such flimsy grounds will not, in my opinion, advance the cause of truth or serve any good purpose. Rather let us follow the advice of one of the greatest apostles of freedom contained in the words, "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good." A. H. TABRUM.

German Soldiers and Chinese Gods.

A LETTER from a German soldier gives a very picturesque description of German military life in China, after the Kaiser's "lease" of a slice of Chinese territory. "One fine morning," he writes, "our company started upon an exploration, heavily laden with black bread and cartridges. We passed through two villages, and then came to the town of Tsimo, where we took up our quarters in a temple of idols just outside the town. It was full of gods, and we found them very useful as posts, and slung our hammocks on them. The Chinese thronged in thickly, and gaped with astonishment at the position we had chosen for our sleeping-quarters. They evidently expected that the gods would avenge the insult done them by the German devils, and would destroy us all during the night. But we slept famously, their deities not even troubling us with bad dreams, and started fresh for our next march early in the morning. The Social Democratic *Vorwärts*, a journal with which we cannot often agree in its political extravagance, published a very just and moderate criticism upon this trooper's narrative. It is to be remembered that the incident happened before there was any hint or anticipation of the late Chinese barbarity to the German Ambassador, or to any other Europeans, and that the German soldiers were not marching across Kiautschou as the enemies, but as the civilising friends and allies, of the Chinese people. "What would be said by our Berlin experts in the comparative scientific study of religions," asks the *Vorwärts*, "if the Chinese Kaiser were to 'lease' a province of Germany, and his soldiers to sling their hammocks to the figures of the Christian saints in our parish churches? Does not the letter—printed by our local contemporary—which, by the way, is a semi-official journal—give us a hint how it is that the common Chinaman takes so barbarous a dislike to his European civilisers?"

—*Daily News.*

Superstitious Man.

To all earth's blessings deaf and blind,
Lost to himself and to his kind,
With mad presumption, lo! man tries
To pierce the ether of the skies.

His fancy winged to worlds unknown,
He scorns the treasures of his own;
By fears of hell and hopes of heaven,
His noble mind to madness driven.

Oh, first of all the tribes of earth,
Wake to the knowledge of thy worth;
Then mark the ills of human life,
And heal its woes and quench its strife.

Victim and tyrant thou, O man;
Thy world, thyself, thy fellows scan,
Nor forward cast an anxious eye;
Who knows to live shall know to die.

—*Torch of Reason.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

Open-air Propaganda.

Station-road (Camberwell): 11.30, A lecture.
Peckham Rye: 3.15, E. Pack.
Brockwell Park: 3.15, A lecture; 6.30, E. Pack.
Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, E. Pack.
Kilburn (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, F. Schaller.
Hammersmith (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, F. A. Davies.
Finsbury Park: 3.30, A lecture.
Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen; 6.30, Freethought Demonstration—Addresses by Messrs. G. W. Foote, C. Watts, C. Cohen, and A. B. Moss.
Mile End Waste: 11.30, W. Heaford; 7.15, R. P. Edwards. August 22, at 8.15, W. J. Ramsey.
Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, A lecture.
West Ham Branch (Stratford Grove): 7.30, W. Heaford.
Battersea Park Gates: 11.30, F. A. Davies.

COUNTRY.

Liverpool: Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. Closed until September 2. Outdoor lectures at the Monument, bottom of London-road, on August 19 and 26, at 7 p.m.; and on September 2, at 3 p.m. August 19, at 7, Stanley Jones, "The Reaction in Modern Society."

South Shields (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Important Business Meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—August 19, a. and e., Victoria Park.

Arthur B. Moss, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—August 26, m., Mile End.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—August 19, Northampton. 26, Birmingham. September 10, Debate at Bradford. 16, Birmingham. October 1 and 2, Debate at Birmingham.

F. A. Davies, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—August 19, m., Battersea; e., Hammersmith. 26, a. and e., Brockwell Park. September 2, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 9, Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

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(Continued from p. 528.)

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[*Continued on p. 527. Look There!*]

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Christian and Scientist.

One of the great conflicts of the present age is that which is going on between science and religion. By the latter term is generally meant, in this country, the teachings and doctrines called Christianity. Science is based upon a knowledge of the natural, while the foundation of Christianity is speculation in reference to the alleged supernatural. We thoroughly endorse the late Professor Huxley's statement: "That every new discovery in science pushes the supernatural further from us by enlarging the boundary of human knowledge." Hence we find that, when the Christian faith was more popular as a real profession than it is to-day, modern science was comparatively unknown; but now that science is the most powerful factor in the regulation of human affairs, practical Christianity is "more honored in the breach than the observance." This is not surprising when, as we intend to show, it can be proved that the two—science and Christianity—are antagonistic, both in principle and in method. The latter is not only unscientific in itself, but it is opposed to the facts demonstrated by scientific investigation.

With the usual lack of consistency upon the part of certain professors of Christianity, they allege that there is nothing in their faith which is contrary to science, and yet they have made frequent attempts to *reconcile* the two. Now, it may be fairly asked, if the two are in harmony, where is the necessity of attempting to reconcile them? In our opinion, no such reconciliation could be accomplished unless the language of the Bible could be so translated as to make ancient words express modern ideas. Is this, however, possible? We think not; but even if it were, the reconciliation referred to would not be effected, for the obvious reason that the faith as it at present exists would be really transformed to something of a very different nature. The old allegation, that we do not know what matter really is, in no way affects the truth of our contention that Christianity and science are antagonistic. We may ask, What is spirit? Upon this point, be it observed, there is this important difference: that, although the scientist does not profess to explain what matter is in its essence, he knows what the term connotes, and he is familiar with the properties, powers, and movements of what is known by that term. Can the Christian accurately say as much of what is called spirit? We reply, he cannot.

Science means knowledge which is derived from investigation and experiment. It signifies the practical application of the results of observing the "invariability of phenomena." A scientist is one who accepts the systematised inferences drawn from those movements which are termed "laws of nature." These natural operations teach us that similar effects will always follow similar causes, if the circumstances surrounding the event are the same. Science is concerned only with phenomena, the term evolution being used to denote the process by which all known origins and changes have taken place. It accepts nothing as settled truth which may exist outside the lines of demonstration. The scientist holds that whatever happens depends upon preceding events, and that what occurs now will influence that which may follow, whether it be in connection with the falling of a stone or with the breaking up of an empire. It is this regularity between cause and effect which is called by Tyndall "the stability of natural law." He also adds: "The order and energy of the universe I hold to be inherent, and not imposed from without; the expression of fixed laws, and not of arbitrary will, exercised by what Carlyle would call an Almighty Clockmaker." Whatever interferes with this sequence in nature must be pronounced *un*scientific. Orthodox Christianity is based upon the supposition that this natural stability can be, and is, interfered with, and it is therefore demonstrably opposed to science.

A Christian is one who accepts the New Testament teachings as a true exposition of the means by which the world was once created and is now governed; he believes that at one period the universe was not, but that it was called into existence by the voice of God; that since its creation it has always been, and still is, under God's protection and guidance; and that there is a devil who is constantly employing agencies to frustrate the decrees and purposes of an omnipotent God. Further, a Christian professes to believe that all the events in life are subject to the irresistible will of God; that human requirements may be obtained through supplications to him; and that his wisdom is seen in the constant regulation of matter and force for the good of the human race. Such is the professed belief of the orthodox Christian; and the very fact that the method of operation claimed for what is alleged to be spiritual differs so essentially from that of the material renders it impossible for both to operate on or in phenomena at the same time. If a scientist, therefore, profess the Christian faith, he cannot apply his scientific method to it without going in opposition to its claims. Whatever agencies may be alleged to have any influence over the operations of nature, the scientist knows that the truth of science, resting as it does upon the fulcrum of reason, is the only known power that does or can move the world for good.

As it is written, "if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand," neither can antagonistic methods be usefully employed at the same time and place. Those who accept the teachings of chemistry, that matter and force are indestructible and unlimited, cannot subscribe to the theory of the creation of the world, which is one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. To reject the idea of the creation, and all its supposed consequences, is to sap the very basis of the Christian faith, and to entirely ignore its remedy for the evils said to have resulted from the fall of man. Growing out of this alleged fall is the Bible story of the universal flood, which no scientist, who relies upon the result of geological investigation, can believe to be an historical fact. Neither can he consistently accept as true such statements as the naming of all the animals by Adam and the talking of the serpent. The first implies that Adam had more knowledge than it is reasonable to suppose he possessed, and the second imputes a faculty to the "beast of the field" of not only being able to talk, but also of possessing the argumentative power of refuting the assertions of his Creator. Such a specimen of the lower animals is contrary to what is known of any of their species. No scientist to-day can endorse the Christian teachings that the Adam of the Bible was the father of the human race, and that death originated through his introducing sin into the world. These teachings are refuted by indisputable facts. Science has proved that man existed upon the globe thousands of years before the alleged time of Adam, and that death reigned on the earth for ages anterior to the story of the Garden of Eden. Now, the opinions held by the scientist and the Christian in reference to these questions cannot be in harmony, and therefore a man of science can be no believer in what is termed the supernatural part of

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Christianity. He may, of course, accept some of the teachings found in the New Testament as being true and useful; but, while he is unable to agree with the very fundamentals of the faith, he cannot be termed a Christian in the legitimate sense of the word.

The orthodox Christian teaches that the most important consideration for man is the condition of his soul. Is he fit to die, and is he in a state to enjoy happiness when the soul is separate from the body? The scientist, on the contrary, devotes his practical attention to the body and to the affairs of this life. He professes no knowledge of a future state of existence, or of the condition of things where functions are supposed to operate without organs. He recognises soul as the name for the natural animating principle of being, and as knowable only by its manifestations in a human organism; and the limit of the one existence, he considers, coincides with that of the other. With the scientist, continuity applies to the species, not to the individual. Further, he is compelled to keep his mind free from all notions of "Providential interference," in which the Christian professes to have such faith. The idea of the winds, the waves, or the storms being controlled by any god never enters the mind of the scientist, although it forms part of the Christian ritual. Thunder and lightning the scientist regards as natural products, while many Christians have professed to hear and see in these manifestations the finger and the voice of God. To men of science those who appeal to a god to regulate the weather are on a level with the rain-makers found amongst savage tribes.

That the products of the earth, and their power in giving health, strength, and energy, should depend upon the adoption of the Christian religion is what no scientist would seriously allege, although, by not doing so, he rejects the palpable declarations of Jesus. The founder of the Christian faith not only did not teach science, but many of his precepts, if put into practice, would result in that which would be the very opposite of scientific. In my opinion, therefore, the wise conclusion to arrive at is that, inasmuch as a man cannot be both a scientist and a Christian, the former is preferable to the latter as the real benefactor of the human race.

Charles Watts.

Shakespeare: The Man.—II.

Let us now turn to the criteria which Mr. Goldwin Smith uses for "finding Shakespeare"—if we may so express it—in his writings:—

> "In the work even of the most dramatic of dramatists the man can hardly fail sometimes to appear. There are things which strike us as said for their own sake more than because they fit the particular character; things which seem said with special feeling and emphasis; things which connect themselves naturally with the writer's personal history. There are things which could not be written, even dramatically, by one to whose beliefs and sentiments they were repugnant. Any knowledge which is displayed must, of course, be the writer's own; so must any proofs of insight, social or of other kinds. Inferences as to the writer's character from such passages are precarious, no doubt; yet they may not be altogether futile."

These criteria are not displayed in any logical order; indeed, they are rather haphazard; nevertheless, they are to a large extent sound, only they require to be applied with very great skill and delicacy. We cheerfully concede that even a dramatist can "hardly fail sometimes to appear" in his works; in fact, we have argued that he appears in them all the time. This appearance, however, is not direct and obvious, but indirect and suggestive. Just as a Pantheist like Goethe calls nature the garment of God, by which alone he is visible; so we may say that such a supreme artist as Shakespeare is behind all his creations, and is always perceptible there to those who have sufficient insight or intuition. He does not say "I am here," after the fashion of an inferior dramatist like Byron, whose principal heroes are the projections of his own selfhood. The revelation is not by body or voice, but by an electric presence. The living genius pulses forth its power, and we feel that it excels all its achievements. Not that we invariably feel this truth. We are all too prone to ignore it. We are apt to look upon the vast gallery of Shakespeare's creations as something exterior to him, whereas they were all conceived by his genius, and lived within him before they existed beyond him. Dr. Johnson was once annoyed by a dream, in which an adversary had defeated him in argument; but he recovered his serenity of mind on recollecting that he himself had supplied both sides of the discussion. A similar recollection must aid us in our appreciation of Shakespeare. He created all the vital, individual characters of his dramas; he gave them their virtues and their vices, their qualities and their defects; he endowed them with their appropriate language; he furnished them with all their wisdom, wit, strength, beauty, grace, valor, and heroism. From his own mind he drew the restless, far-glancing philosophy of Hamlet; from his own nature the subtle and exquisite witcheries of Cleopatra. All the characters of all his plays are partial incarnations of himself. They are but representations of him; splendid symbols thrown off by the incessant activity of his amazing genius. He was more than they—infinitely more. They were samples and specimens, and he was the freighted store. His creative force was as full and rich as ever when he set his final seal upon the majestic *Tempest;* his wealth of thought, his opulence of imagination, his imperial command of language, were just as magnificent. His treasury was too vast to be impoverished by any expenditure. It could only be rifled by the supreme despoiler of mortality.

> O proud death,
> What feast is toward in thine eternal cell!

We will now look at the application of Mr. Goldwin Smith's criteria. As an instance of things said for their own sake, he cites that lovely passage from the last act of the *Merchant of Venice*, beginning with the line—

> How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!

"Sleeps" is one of those magical, audacious expressions of which only the highest genius is capable. Tom Moore, we believe, and even Byron, misquoted it as "falls," which is commonplace in comparison. Mr. Goldwin Smith calls it a "poetic voluntary." He points out what should never be forgotten, that Shakespeare was a poet before he became a playwright, and that it is the profound poetical element of his masterpieces which renders them in a large degree unactable; a point, by the way, that was inimitably argued and illustrated by Charles Lamb. Incidentally, it is noticed that Ben Jonson's reference to Shakespeare's "small Latin and less Greek" simply meant that he was "not classically cultured." Ben Jonson spoke as a deep scholar, one of the best in England, who was even consulted by the thrice-learned Selden. Shakespeare in all probability knew nothing of Greek. Latin he learnt, like every other pupil, at the common grammar school. That he knew French is certain. "It can hardly be doubted," Mr. Goldwin Smith says, "that he understood Italian."

With regard to Polonius's advice to Laertes, Mr. Goldwin Smith remarks that it must be set down to the credit of Shakespeare himself, because it "really does not well suit the character of Polonius, who is generally represented as a pompous old fool." Yes, he *is* generally so represented, but this is a great mistake. Hamlet does cry "these tedious old fools!" when Polonius is trying with his worldly plummet to sound the mysterious depths of a greater nature. But in the common sense of the word Polonius is not a fool. He is wise as the world goes; that is to say, shrewd. And he is moral as the world goes; that is to say, prudent and decorous. We think, therefore, that his famous advice to Laertes is quite characteristic of the man; and he would naturally express his best, not his worst, thoughts on such an occasion.

Mr. Goldwin Smith asserts that "the mystery of Shakespeare's Sonnets will never be solved." But is not the "mystery" an invention? Is it not like the "mystery of evil," a manufacture of intellectual busybodies? We also regret to hear Mr. Goldwin Smith echoing the usual old talk about Shakespeare's estrangement from his wife. Where is the *proof* that he saw little of her and the children for eleven years? Is there any real *evidence* that she was not with him in London? That he led anything like a disorderly life is absolutely disproved by the rapidity as well as the quality of his

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dramatic work, to say nothing of his business labors at the theatre. Critics began very early to make up their minds on a plentiful lack of evidence, and the tradition was religiously handed down from generation to generation. And as there is nothing like a prepossession to play the devil with the simplest facts, they presently found a ridiculous corroboration in Shakespeare's will, by which he left his wife only the legacy of his "second best bed"—having, as one fool commentator sneered, worn out the best one with her rival. Whereas the truth is that Shakespeare's wife, according to the custom of the age, was already provided for; and in all probability the second best bed was *their* bed, perhaps their marriage-bed; the best bed being in the guest-chamber—or, as we now say, the spare bedroom. Really, if the method of so many critics and commentators were applied in courts of justice, no man's liberty, honor, or life would be worth a month's purchase; accusation would prove guilt, and sentence would be involved in every indictment.

Assuming that Shakespeare's marriage was unfortunate and unhappy, Mr. Goldwin Smith says:—

> "All this considered, we have reason to be thankful for the essential soundness of Shakespeare's morality, especially with regard to marriage. There is not in him anything of the evil spirit of the Restoration drama. Matrimony with him is always holy, and though attacks upon its sanctity form the subject of more than one of his plots, he carries it through them inviolate. There is no Don Juan among his heroes."

Substantially we think this is undeniable. Shakespeare understood—nay, he *realised*, which is much more—that human society and civilisation are founded, first upon affection, and secondly upon discipline. "Conscience is born of love," he says in one of his sonnets; and that is the whole primary philosophy of evolution in a nutshell. But the time comes when love and affection, which is one of its reflexes, need discipline in the interest both of the individual and of the social organism. Order, custom, and habit are as necessary as freedom and spontaneity; in other words, the conservative element is as necessary as the progressive. Now the family is the first degree of social order, and no one has yet shown how the family is possible without marriage. The two together secure—not perfectly, but as far as may be—the socialisation of the sexual impulse. Let that instinct, and the other great instinct of self-preservation—under which all our emotions may be subsumed—once have absolute free play, unchecked by laws, forms, and social regulations, and we should soon fall back through barbarism into savagery. Shakespeare puts this in his incomparable way, at the close of that long and wonderful passage of social philosophy in *Troilus and Cressida*:—

> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite;
> And appetite, an universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey,
> And, last, eat up himself.

We fully agree with Mr. Goldwin Smith on this point, but we differ from him on a collateral topic.

> "It must be owned that in *Measure for Measure*, in some of the Falstaff scenes, and elsewhere, Shakespeare plays with certain subjects in a way suggestive of looseness in sexual morality."

Jack Falstaff talks in character. Huxley, in a letter to Grant Allen, called "Honest Jack" a great philosopher. This is true enough, but his philosophy began and ended with the world he lived in. On the sexual side he was a pure (or impure) anarchist. He talks as such, and acts as such. We may call him a most delightful old rascal. But one Jack Falstaff is enough at a time, and Shakespeare drew but one; and that he drew him with as much loving care as he drew Hamlet only proves the astonishing catholicity of his genius. With regard to certain scenes and passages in *Measure for Measure*, we admit that they *display* looseness in sexual morality, but not that they are *suggestive* of it. Coleridge disliked that play; probably not for the rather fantastic reasons he assigned, but because of its grim and relentless treatment of the darker sides of human nature. Yet through all the mire of that tremendous drama the noble Isabella moves with spotless and radiant purity. In presence of that divine woman, the weak and profligate Lucio exclaims: "I hold you for a thing enskied and sainted." He was unable to conceive the possibility of a taint in her adorable character.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

The Progress of Secularism.

(Continued from page 516.)

IN my last article I pointed out at some length, in reply to those who complain of the slowness of the development of the Secular movement, that, bearing in mind the peculiar nature of our work, such complaints were far from warrantable. We find on all sides increasing attention being paid to the secular view of life; we find the old views on religion rapidly losing their force; and, although the old faith dies hard, yet each year brings fresh signs of its internal decay. And this gradual dissolution is, as I have said, all that we can sanely hope for. A religious system does not spring up in a night, nor does it pass away in a day. If we can hasten its decay, our work is justified, and no one who looks back at the history of the present century can doubt that, from this point of view, we have much cause for self-gratulation.

So far, the grumblers who complain that we do not get on. But if, by these complaints, it is meant that we *might* get on faster, then I am not only in agreement, but fully believe that more rapid progress is inevitable, provided proper use is made of the materials to hand. The rate of progress of a movement is never at any time a fixed quantity. It becomes greater as the forces behind it increase in strength and as those who take part in it become fully conscious of its true nature. The obstacles to the development of Rationalism are not by any means difficult to understand, although they may be difficult to remove; but, as the first step towards the solution of any problem is the exact understanding of its terms, so a brief consideration of some of the principal difficulties in our path may pave the way towards their removal.

The first obstacle to Rationalistic development, the only natural one in reality, is that of heredity. It is a commonplace to point out that all primitive thinking is fetishistic, or that, in this respect, the history of the individual is an epitome of the history of the race. Yet it is this initial circumstance, joined with the fact that for numberless generations the non-religious type of mind was ruthlessly weeded out, that makes the disintegration of religious beliefs such a slow process. For we have to fight, not only the present, but the dead weight of the past. One cannot expect to overturn in a day the accumulated tendencies of centuries of selection. We are the heirs of the ages morally and intellectually—we inherit its vices along with its virtues—with the result that, although the acquired knowledge of the individual may lead him from religious beliefs, his instincts are often in a contrary direction.

Against this influence we can only oppose the slow action of education in both the narrower sense of imparting instruction and the wider sense of developing the individual intellect by means of developing the society of which it is a part. But here at the start we are faced with serious difficulties. On the one hand, social opinion, in virtue of the causes already noted, strongly favors religious belief, and, on the other, our educational machinery is still largely dominated by clerical influence when it is not completely controlled by it. The passing of the Education Act of 1870 was a tremendous gain to the cause of Secularism. It was a practical admission of the supremacy of "this worldism"—an assertion of the supreme duty of the State to attend to purely secular affairs. But it still allowed religious teachings to occupy a certain subordinate position. And this, together with the subsidising of the Voluntary schools by the State, gave the clergy a power of which they were not slow to take advantage. The mere selection of the Bible for use in schools gave it an air of superiority over all other books, and this early prejudice was easily strengthened and encouraged by the teachings and general circumstances of after life. Children are prepared for the hands of the clergy by the

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mere selection of the Bible for use in schools, and, so long as this is the case, we can hardly hope that the spread of Secularism will proceed as smoothly as it might otherwise do.

There is, therefore, one principle that should be adopted and advocated by all Secularists, and which also ought to be incorporated in the aims and objects of the Society. This is Universal School Boards. We are all agreed that education should be compulsory, that it is unwise to leave it entirely to all parents to say whether their children shall receive the rudiments of a sound education or not; let us also insist that, if education be compulsory, the State should take complete control of education *everywhere*. This does not mean prohibiting religious instruction, only cutting it adrift from State support directly or indirectly. It is, to my mind, absurd that, having decided that the education of children is one of the prime concerns of the State, it should be left to a particular locality to say whether it will have a School Board or go without it. Children are born in one place, but they do not always die there, nor is their influence in after life ever circumscribed by the place of their birth. It is a national concern, not a parochial one; and although the establishment of universal School Boards, with purely secular education, would aid enormously the disintegration of theological beliefs, yet their creation may be based upon the broad ground of a sane social policy and the dictates of a sound conception of social duty.

But for this we require the creation of a strong public opinion in this direction. It is still the power of social *prestige* that gives religious beliefs a great deal of their power, and, so long as Secularism is lacking a certain social standing, its influence will be found wanting in proportion. Unfortunately, Christianity is still further strengthened by the fact that large numbers of Freethinkers, of various kinds, continue to give it a certain nominal support, while repudiating its intellectual pretensions. Were the support which is given indirectly to the current religion by unbelievers replaced by a whole-hearted support of those movements that have legitimate claims upon their time and attention, the cause of Freethought might be furthered enormously. It is surely time that it was realised by all that in this matter there is no standing neutral. The man or woman who fails to support one party is indirectly helping the other. A large part of the strength of religion to-day is more apparent than real—is made up of the backwardness and timidity of its legitimate enemies. I know all that may be said as to the dangers of speaking, the financial or social ruin that may result therefrom, but am inclined to think that, although in many cases the plea is a good one, in many others fear exaggerates the danger, while in all the danger would certainly be lessened by a little plainer speaking than is at present the rule. At any rate, it seems to me hopeless to expect to create the public opinion we desire without some such move. The only way to gain respect for one's opinions is to commence by paying proper respect to them one's self, and this can hardly be the case while they are kept quietly in the background or brought forward with an apologetic air that half invites and half excuses the conduct of the average religionist.

And, as with the lower education, so with the higher. A great deal of our current history is still written in such a manner as to bolster up religious beliefs, even when it is not avowedly written with that object. Although, happily, not quite so common as in recent years, yet books are still issued doctored, mutilated, in such a manner that they shall not run counter to religious prejudices on the subject with which they deal. One need only refer to the villainous manner in which modern editions of Hume are served out to the public to see how well the tendency towards religion, created by heredity and fostered by early education, is strengthened by subsequent events. It is not unusual, even with our leading historians, to find, for example, the rise of Christianity treated as though it were quite different to all other religions that the world has seen; while any attempt to treat the subject in a scientific manner is tabooed by the press and shunned by the general publishers.

The removal of all these obstacles to the development of our cause is, to a considerable extent, in our own hands, even quite so since the creation of a machinery that gives the Society's work a certain legal status, and provides absolute security for whatever funds it may happen to possess. History has been written so as to support Christian pretensions, simply because there has been a market for it and funds to pay for work done. The only sure remedy for this condition of things is for our movement to be placed in a position whereby it can assist in the publication of such works as aim at writing history in a scientific manner. Much might even now be done by the creation of a central library which should contain a judicious selection of books, among which readers and inquirers would be certain to find all that they were searching for. The first step towards this has been already taken, and its development must depend to a large extent upon the support it receives.

Let us, at least, face one simple conclusion. The economic and social factors will express themselves, deplore it though we may. So long as the religious organisations hold out a certain living for those who champion their pretensions, so long as a certain social standing is accorded to the advocate of religious beliefs, while social ostracism and privation are the lot of such as stand openly forward as Freethinkers, so long religion will have a practical monopoly of the field. This will not be because of deliberate dishonesty on the part of all who advocate religion, but simply that, under given conditions, there is no great inducement to investigate its claims. As a matter of sincere intellectual conviction religious belief in this country is practically dead amongst educated people. But religious beliefs are not existent in teaching only; they are incarnate in institutions, and these institutions have to be fought largely on economic and social grounds. It is in this direction that the force of Secularism must be spent in an increasing measure in the future. The Freethought fight in the past has been the skirmishing that precedes the regular battle. Under those conditions strong organisation was not perhaps so important. But in the immediate future the best work of the party will have to be given to the planning and building of a strong organisation; and, although this work may not have the dash and glitter of the fighting of earlier years, it may yet be productive of more permanent good.

C. Cohen.

An Ætiological Myth.

A little time ago a long and animated discussion on the story of Jonah took place in the columns of the *Guardian*. We have it on the authority of the *Church Times* that the conclusions arrived at were "lame and impotent." How could they be otherwise when, in the interests of so-called "divine" revelation, the most fantastic pranks were then, as they often have been, played with a plain, unvarnished story, obviously incredible of course, but, all the same, intended to be accepted as literal matter of fact, and undoubtedly so accepted by Jesus Christ, if we may believe the New Testament writers? We used to call the story a piece of absurd fiction. Now, it seems, we must describe it as "an ætiological myth." Of course, it remains none the less silly; but modern Church critics think it necessary to have some regard to sound, and so they cloak their unbelief under the euphemism—an ætiological myth.

The discussion commenced on a review of a book by a Freethinker, the late Mr. W. Simpson, called *The Jonah Legend*, in which he maintained the whimsical hypothesis—perhaps it was only a ponderous joke—that the swallowing of Jonah by the fish was really a symbolical way of representing a form of initiation in which the neophyte, swallowed up by the monster Sheôl, was given back to newness of life, the fish being merely the typical place of re-birth. The Rev. Dr. A. Smythe Palmer, in a recent issue of the *Church Times*, observes that this is obviously unconvincing. That is so; but it is not less convincing than other hypotheses advanced by commentators having some claim to be regarded as orthodox. Dr. Palmer, however, goes on to say that "neither the novel theory of Simpson, nor the criticisms of those who have had no difficulty in holding it up to ridicule, have succeeded in tracing the narrative, as it stands, to its probable source, nor have they attempted

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to give any intelligible explanation as to how the incident of the great fish came to be introduced."

Why should they be expected to trace it to its source, and to account for it, any more than if it were the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk? Its source and the object of its introduction are probably the same as those of all-wonderful yarns, and it happens to be less supported in its credibility than the familiar yarns about the old "Sea Serpent." To disbelieve a story does not always, or generally, involve the necessity of explaining how it originated, or what idea or motive persons had in their heads when they put it in circulation. Of course, it may be interesting from various points of view to trace as far as possible, and the business of life will permit, the origin of various familiar legends; but there is no obligation to do so simply because they appear in the Bible, though that seems to be the idea entertained by Dr. Smythe Palmer.

He thinks that recent researches into the remote antiquity of the Akkadian and Babylonian languages have helped to throw new light on the Jonah story. He commences with the fact that numerous legends have taken their rise from a misunderstanding of archaic words or phrases which came to be taken too literally. Thus, because in the Vedas the sun, with his far-reaching beams, is sometimes called the "golden-handed," the Brahmans, turning the poetical metaphor into a prosaic fact which they felt bound to explain, fabled that the Sun, as a personage, had once, as a sacrifice, cut off his hand and had it replaced by an artificial hand made of gold. Then there is the mediæval legend of the gigantic St. Christopher, which is due to a vivid imagination working upon the old theological word "Christophoros," "he who carries Christ" (within him). These are two instances cited by Dr. Smythe Palmer, and serve to show how, as Bacon says, "Words, as a Tartar's bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment." Another instance is cited by the Rev. C. J. Ball, who suggests that the early Semitic belief that Eve, the first woman, was literally formed out of the side of the first man may have originated in a misunderstanding of "Adam," a word which was at first applied to *both* of the first pair. In the ancient Sumerian, which lies far back of all the Semitic languages, *A-dam* meant a *side mate—i.e.*, a spouse, or one of a conjugal pair (*Light from the East*, p. 20). The name of the woman *Havva* may easily have contributed to this misunderstanding if, as Professor Kleinert, of Berlin, has suggested, that word came to be mixed up with the old Semitic '*hav*, a rib, which still survives in Arabic. Professor Max Müller, in his *Lectures on the Science of Religion*, remarks: "We shall never understand the ancient language [of the first chapters of Genesis] rightly unless we make allowance for the influence of ancient language on ancient thought."

Professor Kleinert thus accounts for the Biblical fish story. In early Semitic, the fish (*nûn*), from the prolificness with which it multiplies and "with fry innumerable swarms," was adopted as a symbol of multitudinous increase. When men teemed and multiplied, they were said to be fish-like. Now, the city of Nineveh was "the type and example of the teeming populations of the heathen world" (Kalisch), and, on account of its proverbial populousness (Jonah iv. 11), it was named in Assyrian *Ninua*, which means "fish city." Upon the basis of this, the Professor suggests that Jonah, when he ventured into Nineveh, would be for three days lost to sight in the "fish-house"!

Dr. Smythe Palmer points out that the Septuagint and Philo represent Jonah as saying: "Yet three days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." May not these ideas, he asks, have afterwards taken the shape of the Haggadic or parabolic statement that the prophet had been engulfed in the interior of a great fish, from which he subsequently emerged alive and uninjured?

Well, they might, but it is easier to believe the story to be a pure effort of fiction. Dr. Smythe Palmer urges that in a very similar manner Jeremiah depicts Israel's enforced sojourn in Babylon and deliverance thence under the figure of being swallowed up by a dragon and being cast out (Jer. li. 34):—

> "I may add, further, that the expression, 'Out of the belly of hell (Sheôl), cried I' (Jonah ii. 3), which occurs in the Psalm that is put into Jonah's mouth, may very likely have contributed to the idea that some engulfing monster was demanded in the narrative. Both Sheôl and the sea were alike conceived as a devouring creature with gaping mouth and rapacious maw. So Shakespeare, 'Some envious surge will in his brinish bowels swallow him' (*Tit. Andron.* iii. 4). See *Babylonian Influence on the Bible*, p. 62 *seq.*, and Professor Cheyne, *Theological Review*, 1877, p. 215. Indeed, we may reverently say that these were the ideas with which the history was associated in the mind of our Lord himself (St. Matt. xii. 40). Dr. Otto Mitius has collected abundant evidence from the catacombs and elsewhere to show that the engulfment and deliverance of Jonah were the favorite subjects chosen by early Christian artists to symbolise their hope of resurrection after death. They occur repeatedly with this meaning on Roman Sarcophagi and the walls of sepulchral chambers (*Jonah on the Monuments of Christian Antiquity*; see also Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotterranea*, bk. iv., ch. 8)."

From all of this, and much more which it would be tedious to reproduce, Dr. Smythe Palmer arrives at the (to him) satisfactory conclusion that the "mission of Jonah to Nineveh can thus be held as an objective fact, even though the incident of the great fish may be susceptible of another interpretation." This may be Dr. Palmer's belief, but it was not that of Jesus Christ.

Francis Neale.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

Donation List to Date.

	£	s.	d.
John Downing: "Liberty" As unfolded in Milton's *Areopagitica*	200	0	0
J. Umpleby ...	20	0	0
Major John C. Harris, R.E.	20	0	0
Horace Seal ...	25	0	0
A Friend	25	0	0
J. C. Banks ...	10	0	0
W. Mumby ...	5	0	0
J. F. Hampson ...	4	0	0
D. Yule	10	0	0
James Neate ...	1	0	0
Mrs. Neate ...	1	0	0
R. Davison ...	2	0	0
G. J. Warren ...	1	0	0
T. P. Stewart ...	1	1	0
R. T. Nichols ...	2	2	0
C. Girtanner ...	10	10	0
David Watt ...	1	0	0
C. J. Peacock ...	5	5	0
A. H. Braine ...	1	1	0
H. Trotman ...	0	10	6
H. B. Dodds ...	0	10	0
W. Garthwaite ...	0	10	0
J. G. Dobson ...	0	10	0
J. Barry	0	10	0
T. H. Body ...	0	2	6
J. Partridge ...	0	10	6
Martin Weatherburn	0	10	0
A. G. Lye	0	5	0
E. Self	0	5	0
L. Simpson ...	0	5	0
T. Ollerenshaw ...	0	10	0
W. Barks	0	10	0
J. T. Ives	0	1	0
J. Bullock	0	5	0
A. F. Bullock ...	0	2	6
C. Handley ...	0	5	0
W. M. Constant ...	0	3	0
W. R. Axelley ...	0	10	0
D. Mitchell ...	1	0	0
Mrs. Brown ...	0	5	0
H. Payne	1	0	0
D. P. S.	1	0	0
J. E. Kins	0	5	0
C. D. Stephens ...	0	10	6
W. H. Spivey ...	0	10	0
M. Dye	0	5	0
F. W. Donaldson ...	1	1	0
A. W. Hutty ...	0	2	0
Minnie, Willie, and Teddie Hutty ...	0	3	0
R. Johnson... ...	2	2	0
H. L.	1	0	0
W. Lamb	0	10	0
L. Edmonds ...	0	5	0
T. Robertson ...	1	1	0
J. O. Bates... ...	1	0	0
H. Waller	0	5	0
F. T.	1	0	0
C. Newell	0	2	6
F. E. Willis ...	0	10	0
F. J. Voisey ...	1	1	0
Monmouth... ...	2	2	0
C. Shepherd ...	0	2	0
Total to date	£368	16	0

This is the holiday season, and a dull one for all sorts of business. I shall not, therefore, occupy any further space this week, on the principle that it is a waste of time and energy to strike cold iron. Next week I shall notice a further letter from Mr. George Anderson; also one from Mr. John Downing. For the present I will only say that I am always open to receive fresh promises towards this important Fund, and that all the readers of the *Freethinker* should bear in mind that the first week in October is "Shilling Week." I may as well repeat that during that week I expect hundreds of my readers to send me at least one shilling, and as many more shillings as possible, on behalf of this Twentieth Century Fund. If all do their duty we shall have a grand rank-and-file collection. It ought to be one of which the party can be proud.

G. W. Foote.

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Acid Drops.

Prophets are seldom honored in their own country. Jesus Christ gained no reputation near his home, and his own family seem to have thought he was mad. The Jews rejected him, in spite of all his "wonderful works," and Christianity has had to find adherents among the Gentiles. In other words, the miracles of Jesus Christ were wasted amongst his own people, who probably saw through them. Other people, in other lands, who never saw the miracles, and had no means of judging them, swallowed them greedily as supernatural occurrences. This is a fact which we have often referred to, and it proves that supernaturalism is born of ignorance and credulity.

Take the somewhat similar case of ghosts. They never appear to sceptics, but only to believers. Moreover, if you ask about a ghost in a house which is said to be haunted, the residents laugh at you. Inquire in the next street, and the people shake their heads and say there is certainly something very strange. Go half a mile away, and you hear that the ghost has been seen frequently. Go double the distance, and you will learn the precise time when you may see it yourself. The farther off the better for the ghost. Distance lends enchantment to the view.

It appears to be just the same with the West Kensington Ghost in Edith-villas. "Strange to say," the *Daily News* reporter observes, "dwellers in Edith-villas do not believe in the ghost. They grow angry when it is mentioned, and talk about the need for lunatic asylums." But this is not "strange" to those who are conversant with the history of superstition.

This particular ghost seems afraid of the police. It has only appeared (to visitors) since the house was uninhabited. During the time that a constable, named Fryer, and his wife were caretakers, the ghost laid low. It never crossed *their* eyesight, and Mrs. Fryer says she would be only too pleased to go back, provided the windows were repaired. For the visitors have been shying stones and brickbats at the apparition.

Rosenthal, the "converted Jew," who preached Christ and him crucified in the Market-place at Blyth, pleaded "guilty" to the charge of stealing a bank deposit for £60, other articles to the value of £6, and £2 14s. 6d. in cash, from his landlord, Mr. Smith. All he could plead in mitigation of sentence was that he had constantly preached the Gospel and denounced the liquor traffic; moreover, it was his first offence. He was sent to gaol for two months with hard labor; and, according to the newspapers, he smiled when he heard the decision of the magistrates. We dare say there was a world of meaning in that smile.

A preacher, who advertises himself in large letters outside his chapel, displays this week a big placard with the following announcement:—

The Rev. —— Will Ask
Next Sunday
"Why Was I Born?"

Why, indeed? His best friends think he will have a difficulty in satisfactorily accounting, if not for his birth, certainly for his continued existence on the broad principle of utility.

A Yorkshire newspaper writer seems to have learnt for the first time that Chinese idols are manufactured in Birmingham. Of course, Chinese and Hindoo, and every sort of idol, has been manufactured in Birmingham for many years past. They turn them out in all sorts and sizes. Some of the Chinese idols are gods of war, judging by their stern looks and murderous swords; another, with a bland look, is a god of peace; others bear hideous leers. All are thoroughly Chinese in character and expression.

An enterprising Birmingham manufacturer is said to be prepared to supply to order all sorts of gods at varying prices. You may have one as low as £2 10s., or one of superior workmanship and size at graduated scales up to £100 or more; but the demand has received a check, owing to the war.

A fine return for all the funds spent on missions to China. Only one Chinaman, we learn, has been regularly ordained a minister of the Gospel. His name is Jam Jee, and he lives in San Francisco.

The *People* has lately been especially strong in regard to missionary mischief and humbug. A working-man correspondent writes last week: "The question of missionaries to China is one that is very often to the front just at present, especially amongst working men, and to help them to understand it I will tell them a little anecdote, which, if it has no other merit, has that of being quite true. I was working some years ago on a railway line in South Australia, on which a lot of Chinamen also worked, and a great friend of mine was the Chinese interpreter, Tung-Ling. One night, as we sat outside his tent, he suddenly said: 'I was Clistian in China five year.' 'But,' said I, 'you are no Christian now.' I knew he was not, because I had seen him burning his 'Joss candles.'

"'No good be Clistian here. Noting get,' he said. And then he told me how, finding that he could get 'plenty licee (rice), and live mission house, and no workee' in China, he came to the conclusion that, if he could get to one of the countries where the missionaries came from, and where they were all 'Clistians,' he would be even still better off, especially as he had been taught English. So he got to Adelaide, and sought out a missionary society, and told them what he was. But, to his great surprise, they did not take the slightest interest in him; did not care whether he was converted or whether he was still 'an heathen Chinee.'

"And, what was worse, they told him there was no rice given away in Australia, and, worst of all, he found that he had got to work for his living, and that is how he came on the railway line, first of all to work with pick and shovel, and afterwards as interpreter, and that is why he was 'Clistian never no more'—not even when he returned to his native land. For, as he said: 'Savee money plenty, go back China, buy lots licee and porkee, live big house. Mission no good'; and he always said, and so did all the Chinese I ever talked to, that there never was such a thing as a converted Chinaman. They are only Christians for what they get, and that is why their own countrymen kill them whenever they can—not because they are Christians, but because they are impostors."

A Boston, U.S.A., newspaper praises a certain clergyman because of "the tactful and reviving way in which he conducts a funeral service. And it detracts neither from the sincerity of this opinion nor from the dignity of his calling to add that his success at a dinner party is equally marked."

The following notice of an event to take place in Kentucky is rather remarkable. It is from the *Mount Vernon Signal*: "The colored people will have a rally at the Court House the fourth Sunday in this month for the purpose of raising money to build a Baptist church. Two ladies, which will be No. 1 and 2, will run a medal race. Everybody is asked to contribute to this cause."

While the orthodox Christian world upholds as inspired the command to use the rod upon children, more enlightened sentiment is driving corporeal punishment from the home and school and imposing the penalties of the law upon the excessive use of the whip. In Trenton, N.J., Robert Scott was a few days ago held in 400 dollar bail for whipping his children. His defence was the biblical one. He quoted passages of Scripture, and even declared that he acted under the direct command of God, and, as he went to his cell to await the action of the grand jury, he muttered a prayer and exclaimed, "Lord, I but did thy bidding." While such belief is held children will remain the slaves of pious and brutal parents. It is only in Bible-dominated countries that children are beaten as a religious duty.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Facts must be faced, says the *Anglican Church Magazine*, and it is a fact that the old-fashioned Sabbatarianism is dying out, and that not only on the Continent. It is little use preaching that it is wrong to do this or that; the more excellent way is to enforce the twofold and universal object of the Sunday—worship and rest; worship first, rest second; and to many toilers rest means healthful recreation.

The *Church Gazette*, in its latest issue, has some amusing notes on a letter written apparently by a Scottish Sabbatarian to the *Glasgow Herald*. The correspondent had heard complaints in the columns of the *Herald* that people actually insist on taking walks about the hill-side on the Sunday. This is all very wrong. He says: "The walkers should stay at home and read, as I do, only such books as the Bible, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, Boston's *Fourfold State*, *The Confession of Faith*, and the *Catechisms*, both short and long."

In a little town in Germany, where there lived a Jewish family—the only one—tradespeople, gentle and friendly, who on all points of social contact were one with their neighbors, there lived also a Gentile woman of wealth, who fed the poor and clothed them, a Christian woman of old Lutheran stock, and narrow as that can be. The Jewess, perceiving it, tried to turn the conversation from the religious topic. "Well, well, dear Mrs. G.," she said soothingly, "some day, when we meet in heaven, we shall all know better." Mrs. G. bristled visibly, as she replied: "What? Our heaven? No, indeed! Mrs. K., we may be good friends here, but there—really, you will have to excuse me."

A Plymouth "brother" fell dead at a prayer meeting at Hereford the other day. His pious occupation at the time

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was no preservative, and yet we still hear a great deal about Providence who watches the sparrows that fall.

While "divine" service was being celebrated at the Chapel of the Virgin at Bebona, a lighted candle fell and caused an outbreak of fire. In the panic which ensued one woman, a servant, was trampled to death, and another young girl was so seriously injured that her life is despaired of. A large number of the congregation were severely bruised.

The spire of Great Marlow Church has been restored at a cost of between £2,000 and £3,000. The work of restoration was necessitated in consequence of the spire having been struck by lightning, and further damaged by a terrific whirlwind a year or two ago. The Lord is no respecter of persons, nor of his own "sacred edifices."

"Life as I Have Found It" is to be the title of the Rev. Dr. Joseph Parker's next volume. The *Topical Times* suggests that the Doctor hasn't found it at all a bad thing on the whole.

Truth asks: How is this for blasphemy? It is the inscription on the back of the bags used by a pork butcher at Bootle, the letterpress being also adorned with an appetising picture of the "celebrated pork pie" sold at this establishment:—

THE ROYAL PORK SHOP
Is noted for the best quality.
WM. MILLERCHEN,
A Poor Sinner, saved by the Grace of God.
"Praise His Name."

Please Note.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.—1 Tim. i. 15.

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.—Amos iv. 12.

This last injunction is a nasty sort of warning to hand to a customer with a pork pie; but, of course, Mr. Millerchen is the best judge of the necessity for it.

The vagaries of Australian animals in Australian sacred edifices have lately afforded the Londoner Sundowner, says the *Topical Times*, a great chance for reminiscence. Thus we learn that a certain Antipodean church was once enlivened by the visit of a goat. It was the day of the harvest thanksgiving, and the place was decorated in the usual way. The goat perambulated down the nave, devouring the corn as he went, eminently satisfied with the proceedings generally. The verger was sent to remove him; but the animal, rushing at the portly little man, butted him furiously. Then, while the official sought to recover breath and courage, Billy ambled away to the chancel. An organised attack was there made upon him—frontal, turning, and from the rear—but in vain. Elusive as De Wet, the goat slipped through the cordon and charged into the pews. Then the ladies rose in a body and stood on the seats (just as if it had been a mouse), and so great did the confusion become that the vicar suspended the service until the animal was captured and order restored.

Speaking at Stratford the other day, Mrs. Ormiston Chant said she had not been to a single church service this year which had not been "desecrated by the raucous, vulgar, wretched noise of newspaper hawkers." From which it is obvious she does not go to church in the evening, for only once or twice has there been any newspaper crying at night. But suppose there had been, what then? The folks who go to church and chapel are, after all, but a minority of "miserable sinners," according to their own account. The great majority—especially those with relatives at the war—have naturally wanted to learn the "latest."

This cry about newspaper hawking in these exciting times comes, we must say, with special grace from religionists, who, from an early hour on Sunday, all the year round, start a most annoying and absolutely unnecessary clanging of church bells, followed later on in the day by the discordant noise of Church and Salvation Army brass bands. Why may not a Sunday newspaper be cried? It often contains more matter of interest and importance than can be found in the sermons to which the church bells noisily summon us.

The late vicar of Butlers Marston, Warwick, named Samuel Walton Kay, has been remanded at Ulverston on a charge of obtaining £10 by a trick at the Crown Hotel, Grange-over-sands. He passed a cheque on the landlord, who afterwards found that prisoner had no account at the bank on which it was drawn. Kay went to Morecambe, where a Grange police-sergeant ran him down hiding under a bed in the top room of a house in Highfield-terrace. In court prisoner said that he intended to repay the money, but evidence was given of a previous conviction for forgery and the same trick at Menai Bridge.

Some Paisley weavers were speaking about their ministers. One said that it was wonderful how much his minister could bring out of Scripture. He had known him to preach several sermons from one text. Another said his minister surpassed that, for he had preached six sermons from the shortest text in the whole Bible. "But that's naethin' to my wife," said the third. "She's been preachin' to me for sixteen years fra nae text at a'."

The *Sunday Companion* revives the old story anent a "Bible-Burners' Club." It introduces the hair-raising narrative in the approved fashion. There are the usual comments of "gross blasphemy," "profane mockery," etc. Also the usual absence of date, names, and place. The whole thing is a lie, but that is a mere trifling feature—no bar at all to its appearance in the *Sunday Companion* under the guise of a solemn verity.

The story, retailed for the fortieth or fiftieth time, is that a number of reckless persons banded themselves together with the name of the "Bible-Burners' Club." At their first meeting, after a series of burlesque solemnities, the "high priest" approached the fire with the Bible in his hands, intending to commit it to the flames; "but at that moment *he suddenly turned pale*, and laid it down, saying: 'We'll not burn this book till we get a better one.'"

Now, the utter absurdity of this appears on the surface. No Freethinker wishes to burn the Bible or any portion of it. Why should he? He doesn't regard it as divine revelation. That notion is exploded. He doesn't admit all the absurd claims made on its behalf. But he has no desire to wipe it out from all possible reading. On the contrary, he wishes people to read it and learn, it may be for the first time, what sort of a book it really is.

The pious inventors of this lie have given themselves away. They have ascribed to Freethinkers exactly the intolerant method of dealing with—not only books, but their writers—which not so many years ago was their own particular method. Freethinkers do not wish to burn books or their writers—though Christians were accustomed in that way to dispose of both. But, apart from any reasoning on the why and wherefore, this story in the *Sunday Companion* is an absolutely contemptible, wretched piece of fiction, and the silly person who edits that paper ought, even in his silliness, to have known better than to have inserted it.

In heaven, we suppose, we shall hear Italians sing without it costing us a red cent.

An inquest was held in London not long ago in which the relation of a deceased person to a neighboring church was inquired into. "To what church did the deceased belong?" asked the coroner. "He was an octogenarian, I believe, sir," said the witness.

A story is told of a rural dean who, when going the round of his churches in the deanery not long ago, found that the majority were kept close barred and bolted during the week. At last, to his great delight, he found a church whose doors were always open. Addressing the clerk, the rural dean said: "Do you find that people retire here for prayer and meditation?" The clerk smiled: "They did try that game at fust, but I pretty soon bundled 'em out, I can tell 'ee."

The villages round Malton were billed with the particulars of a coming sale by auction, which included certain antiquities and curios. The three lines which were printed in the biggest capitals, and which could be read at a considerable distance, were "Three Old Church Fonts," a certain number of "Chinese Geese," and "Seven Tons of Turnip Manure." This caused much scandal among church folk of the district. An incumbent of one of the parishes where these bills were posted, a gentleman of much repute as an antiquary and ecclesiologist, obtained a copy of the poster, and forwarded it to Lord Grimthorpe, asking civilly if he could not interfere to stop the sale of the old fonts, as they probably had been ejected from churches without any faculty, and citing precedents for such action. The reply he got from Lord Grimthorpe was a postcard, on which were written merely these words: "The Chancellor has neither the power nor the inclination to stop anyone selling old church fonts, any more than Chinese geese or turnip manure!"

It is noted by the Berlin correspondent of the *Standard* as a fact of some significance that the dislike of Christians is very strong just now in Japan. The only Christian weekly newspaper in Japanese, the editor of which is a Japanese convert, published an article lately in which some of the ceremonies at the late marriage of the heir-apparent were described as contrary to the spirit of Christianity. For this the editor was condemned to three years' imprisonment, the further circulation of the paper was stopped, and the houses of all Japanese Christians and their friends were searched for any extant issues of the paper. Besides this, fifty persons were sentenced to several months' imprisonment merely because they had given copies of the paper to others. This action was justified even by Liberal Japanese journals, on the ground that the Japanese who is unfaithful to his ancestral religion places himself outside the protection of the laws and the State. Many of the Japanese strongly favor an alliance with China.

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Astonishing! "He gave up God as a nonentity." This was a person whom De Witt Talmage pretends to have met. Talmage lies as often as he tells the truth. Of course, it is possible that this man gave up God as a nonentity. Most of us have done so, and found many confirmations of our unbelief. But the particular invention—very clumsy in its structure—is this: "I could tell you of a comrade who was great-hearted, noble, and generous. He was studying for an honorable profession; but he had an infidel book in his trunk, and he said to me one day: 'De Witt, would you like to read it?' I said: 'Yes, I would.' I took the book and read it only for a few minutes. I was really startled with what I saw there, and I handed the book back to him, and said: 'You had better destroy that book.' No, he kept it; he read; he re-read it. After a while he gave up religion as a myth. He gave up God as a nonentity. He gave up the Bible as a fable. He gave up the Church of Christ as a useless institution."

So he was hopelessly lost, according to De Witt. But perhaps he has survived, and is not at all concerned about his rejection of the Bible or the Church of Christ.

A correspondent of the *Daily Mail* has written on the subject of seaside services—a very seasonable topic. He draws a rather gloomy picture of terrorised little children, and appeals for their protection from the "vain and foolish persons" whose only desire is to hear themselves speak. The *Rock* says: "The writer's anti-Christian zeal is not according to knowledge of facts. They are not of the gloomy order of Christians who conduct these services—for the most part bright, healthily-minded young people, many of them 'Varsity men of the robust stamp of the Studds of cricket fame, who took a great part in this work, and afterwards gave up their lives to the teaching of the bigger children of the heathen world. Nor, again, are the children driven to these meetings. They delight in them, and we have known the youngsters of families, where religious duties are more honored in the breach than in the observance, amongst the most regular of attendants, with the parents not only raising no objections, but themselves very often in time following in their children's footsteps."

The *Rock* is, without doubt, uttering a deliberate lie when it says that children "delight" in these services. None but a blighted, blithering fool would be able to persuade himself that children had the least regard for this pious nonsense, particularly on the sands.

A Scarborough vicar has just preached a sermon that excited a remarkable degree of admiration. The heads of it were sent to a local paper. The preacher, however, was wise enough not to wait for anyone else to find him out, but wrote at once that the sermon was not his own, but by the late Canon Liddon.

"I have sometimes myself," he proceeds, "qualms of conscience about Bunyan, as savoring of the modern novel; but my inclination prevails, as I confess the *Confession* is somewhat dry at times. Paul, indeed, says: 'One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike; let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' And again: 'Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of the Sabbath days.' But I am inclined to think that if Paul had lived now he would, and perhaps soon, have been before the Presbytery for this very broad and, I fear, loose statement. No doubt our Savior walked in the fields and plucked the ears of corn; but that was a dangerous example to follow, so we must be careful. Let us study the *Confession*, for, though it is dry, it is profitable; and let us eschew modern novels, golf, and even pleasure-walking on the Sabbath Day.—I am, &c., An Old Covenanter."

There is not a little irony in this letter suggesting that, after all, it is a libel to pretend that Scotsmen cannot joke, or, if they do so, it is "with deeficulty."

A church in New York City acquired its pulpit Bible in a rather curious way. During the absence of the pastor, the Rev. John B. Shaw, D.D.—as he relates the circumstance in the *Presbyterian Banner*—certain repairs and additions to the church edifice had included the gift of a new pulpit. But the new Bible was found to be too large to fit its lectern, or reading-board. One day a woman came to the minister with a neat package, which she proceeded to untie. He was not surprised to see a beautifully-bound gilt-edged Bible unfolded in her hands; but his feelings changed when she told him that she had found it in an ash-barrel! A family, after a short residence in the apartment-house where she lived, had moved out that morning, and had left their rubbish with the janitor, to be carted away in the city garbage waggon. The costly Bible was amongst this "rubbish." The family record had been cut out of it, being evidently the only thing about it that its owners valued.

Here is another story about a Bible which has all the appearance of being an invention, though retailed as truth. A certain North of England gentleman, a Mr. A.——, noted for his eccentricity and for his love of books, had a nephew, whom, though studying for Holy Orders, he suspected of being a thorough worldling. One day, when this nephew was on a visit, he asked his acceptance of a Bible, which he hoped he would read daily. The young man gave his promise, and departed with the gift, which he put on one side, to remember it only when his uncle, as was often the case, asked him whether he had read a chapter that day, a question he always answered in the affirmative. It chanced one day that a friend, a young doctor, dropped in to have a chat, and took the Bible from the shelf where it lay. "Oh, you've got my uncle's Bible," said the young man. "I quite forgot all about it." "So it would seem," replied the doctor, who appeared to be eagerly devouring its contents. 'Do you feel inclined to sell it? I'll give you a sovereign for it." "All right," was the answer; "hand it over." So the young man received the coin, and his friend carried off the book. A week later his uncle called. He looked round the room. "I don't see the Bible I gave you," he said. "No," answered the nephew; "I can't find it anywhere; it must have been mislaid." "Well, I trust it isn't lost," said the old gentleman, "because it was a first folio Shakespeare, bound in an old Bible cover, and worth £500. But, of course, as you have read it every day, you know that."

The entertaining "Hubert" in the *Sunday Chronicle*, describing the old æsthetic craze, says: "We used to write sonnets, those of us who had a turn for verse, to Death, of whom we were quite amorous, and spoke of a much-desired lover. I remember well going one afternoon to call on a young man who lived in chambers in Gray's Inn Square. He lived on the third floor, and when I arrived at the bottom of his flight of stairs I found those stairs thickly coated with young women in greenish and yellowish velvet and silk gowns, all curled up in sinuous attitudes, and looking like a lot of dear little caterpillars. I could not get to my friend's rooms at all, for I was told they were full already, and that he was reading aloud about James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*.

"Do you know that poem? If not, read it on some wet and gloomy day when you are a trifle down in the dumps, and perhaps you may get somewhere near to the state of mind (we should have called it 'state of soul') at which we tried so conscientiously and strenuously to arrive. The ladies on the stairs were a sort of overflow meeting. And the thing did not strike me as being a bit odd. On the contrary, I went joyfully away, hugging myself on the thought that there was still some love of culture left in Gath, as we habitually called London. I myself had the following lines from our favorite poet written in old English characters on vellum, and hung over the head of my bed:—

"'From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank thee with brief thanksgiving—
Whatever gods may be—
That no life lives for ever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea

"'Then sun nor star shall waken
Nor any change of light;
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight;
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.'"

Self-Sacrifice.

It we all sacrificed ourselves habitually and always, the world would be so much the more wretched in consequence; if we all developed ourselves to the utmost of our ability, the world would be so much the richer and happier. Universal self-sacrifice is a meaningless conception. If one person sacrifices himself or herself for the sake of another, it is in order to make that other the happier. And if the other too lightly accepts the sacrifice, there is wrong and injustice. Most often, indeed, we feel called upon to sacrifice ourselves through some act of selfishness or wrong-doing on the part of our neighbors. Sacrifice is then, in itself, by no means a good thing; at best it is but a *pis aller* [makeshift]. It is forced upon us as a bad necessity by untoward circumstances. If others could be as happy without the need of our sacrificing ourselves, we should all be gainers. But Christianity has so exalted the false idea of self-sacrifice as in itself a good thing that most people are genuinely shocked to hear it even called in question.—*Grant Allen.*

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N. B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stonecutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

To Correspondents.

Mr. Charles Watts's Engagements.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

Mr. Foote is anxious to obtain copies of the *Freethinker* for January 3, July 30, and September 10, 1899. Can any readers of this journal oblige him? Of course payment shall be made for the copies.

W. T. Lipscomb.—Ambrose Bierce is an American writer. We quoted his view, with his name to it, for what it was worth. We don't undertake to defend it, and we don't think it needs any defence. You say there is "a great deal of nonsense" in the *Freethinker*. Have you read the Bible?

James Neate.—Handed to Miss Vance. Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

"Nemo" complains that, having induced a friend to go and hear a Freethought lecture at the Kilburn open-air station, this gentleman waited three-quarters of an hour for the lecturer to turn up, and another half-an-hour for the arrival of the platform; when, being tired of waiting, he walked away, feeling that his time had been miserably wasted. We hope this was an unique and accidental occurrence. That it happened at all is much to be regretted.

E. R. Woodward writes: "I should like to express a hope that your suggested book on Shakespeare will materialise into fact." He adds a compliment which it would be invidious to print in our own journal. This correspondent's article will appear in our next issue.

Martin Weatherburn, sending his subscription to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, says: "I need not assure you that I have full confidence that the Fund, however large it may be, will be honestly and judiciously used in the interest of our cause."

W. Cox.—Mr. Foote has written you. Pleased to hear your open-air meeting at Liverpool on Sunday was well attended.

Minnermus writes: "Your Shakespeare article is very fine. I am looking anxiously for succeeding chapters."

W. P. Ball.—Many thanks for cuttings.

Children's Excursion.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—C. Shepherd, 2s.

R. Chapman.—Mr. Foote has written you as to visiting South Shields.

T. Robertson (Glasgow).—The last Sunday in September is booked for you.

T. Clark, who has taken the *Freethinker* ever since it was a few weeks old, who bought eight copies weekly when it was a penny paper, and has bought four copies since its price was raised to twopence, complains of the shocking way in which newsagents fold it. "It would be a great boon to your readers who have them bound," he says, "if you could send them out already folded." No doubt it would be a great improvement, and we begin to feel inclined to risk the expense.

Victoria Park Friend.—We regret to hear of the death of Mr. Frederick Mortimer at Gravesend. We can endorse every word of the eulogy upon him in the local *Reporter*.

F. E. Willis.—Thanks for cuttings. Mr. Foote is all the better for his partial holiday.

S. A. Hoare.—We have always supplied the *Freethinker* to the trade on sale or return. It was sheer insolence on the part of the wholesale agent to tell the newsagent you refer to that she was "lucky" to get four copies when she wanted eight. She should press the wholesale agent to deal fairly with her; if he will not, she shall be supplied direct from our publishing office. We are obliged to you for your kind attention in the matter.

Received.—Liberator—Crescent—Yorkshire Evening Post—Two Worlds—Truthseeker (New York)—Manchester Daily Dispatch—Huddersfield Daily News—Ethical World—Torch of Reason—Gravesend Reporter—Perthshire Courier—Blue Grass Blade—Freidenker—Freethought Magazine—Secular Thought.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

Lecture Notices must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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Scale of Advertisements:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

Another Freethought Demonstration was held on Sunday evening in Victoria Park. There was a big crowd of people around the Branch stand, and several ladies occupied seats in the centre of the meeting. Mr. James Neate beamed with happiness at the evening's success. Mr. A. B. Moss acted as chairman, and opened the proceedings with a bright little speech, which was heartily applauded. He then called upon his "young" friend, Mr. W. Heaford, who said that they always called him young, though he had been preaching Freethought for twenty-five years. Mr. Heaford's speech was vigorous and effective, and he retired from the platform amidst cheers, to go off and keep his engagement at West Ham. The next speaker was Mr. C. Cohen, who is a local favorite, and met with a very warm reception. Mr. C. Watts was also greeted most heartily, and his peroration was much applauded. Mr. Foote was the last speaker, and was cheered enthusiastically. The big crowd was orderly and appreciative from beginning to end, but there was pandemonium at a Christian meeting in the rear. All the row that *could* be made *was* made, but it did not disturb the serenity of the Freethought speakers, and their huge audience only smiled at the artificial, concerted cheering of the orthodox party. We hear that the speakers of that group indulged in the foulest personalities, and the name of "Foote" was flying about like rice at a wedding. But what does that matter, after all? Doesn't it prove that the Christians feel they have no case when they can only resort to abuse?

The Victoria Park Demonstration began at 6.30, and had to conclude at 7.45, owing to the Park regulations. This necessitated brief, sharp speeches all round. In order to gain a little more time the next Demonstration, which is to be held at Brockwell Park this evening (August 26), has been fixed to begin at 6. This will give something over an hour and a half for the speeches, before the failing light necessitates the cry of "All out."

The Annual Children's Excursion, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place on Saturday, September 1. Brakes conveying the youngsters to High Barnet will start as follows:—From South Place Chapel, 10 o'clock in the morning; from the Marble Arch, Edgware-road corner, at 10; from the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham-court-road, at 10; from the Holloway Castle Hotel, Camden-road, at 10.30. The Athenæum Hall brake will stop at the Great Northern Station, King's Cross, the York-road corner, for the convenience of children living in that quarter, provided Miss Vance receives timely notice of the number and names of the children to be expected. The whole party will meet at a given point, and, having "refreshed," will proceed to their destination by the longest and prettiest route—namely, Winchmore-hill, New Southgate, etc. The return journey, by another route, will be considerably shortened. Those in charge of the brakes will give parents information as to the time when they should meet their children to take them home. Parents will not be able to ride on the brakes, but they can go by train to High Barnet, and Underhill Farm is about ten minutes' walk from the station.

The committee will take all possible care of their young charges. Ample provision will also be made for their refreshment and entertainment. The children must not be under five nor over fourteen. Early application for tickets should be made to Miss Vance, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C.

No doubt a good many subscribers are away from home during this holiday season, but we are astonished that more have not forwarded a donation towards the expenses of this outing for the little ones. It is a matter for the London Freethinkers, not for the provincial ones. Fifty or sixty of them, at least, on seeing this paragraph, should send Miss Vance a trifle (or more) immediately. There really ought to be no begging for such an object.

We have already announced that the National Secular Society's Executive had resolved to call a Conference of "advanced" bodies with a view to promoting the policy of "secular education" in the approaching London School Board elections. A sub-committee was appointed to see to the necessary arrangements, consisting of Messrs. C. Cohen, T. Shore, and G. J. Warren. The large hall of the Club and Institute Union was engaged for Tuesday evening, September 11; and a circular was drafted by Mr. Cohen, inviting all the "advanced" bodies whose addresses could be obtained to

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send delegates to the Conference. Mr. W. Heaford, though not on the sub-committee, kindly assisted in addressing and sending out these invitations, as Mr. Cohen and Mr. Shore had both arranged to take their holiday just then. An excellent and valuable reference to the circular and the Conference appeared in last week's *Reynolds's*. References also appeared in the *Daily News* and the *Morning Leader*.

Messrs. Shore and Cohen, on Saturday evening, August 4, waited on the Executive of the Metropolitan Radical Federation, in order to ascertain whether that body would be likely to assist in the matter of this Conference. The N. S. S. delegates were favorably received, and it was arranged that they should attend again at the full Council meeting, which was to take place in a fortnight. Accordingly, on Saturday evening, August 18, Mr. Cohen, being the only one of the N. S. S. delegates able to be present, laid the "secular education" case before the M. R. F. Council. Mr. F. Pacey moved that the Federation reiterate its sympathy with secular education in Board schools, and pledge itself to support candidates in favor of secular education at the forthcoming School Board election. This was seconded by Mr. Grossmith and carried. Messrs. Hibbard, Verinder, and Grossmith were then appointed as delegates to attend the Conference on September 11.

Several other bodies have intimated their intention of sending delegates to this Conference, and we hope to be able to publish a good list of them in next week's *Freethinker*. In any case, the Conference will clear the ground and put the N. S. S. Executive in a position to act decisively in one direction or another.

It appears that the "Progressives"—that is to say, the Bible-Reading or Chapel party—are bossed by two men. These are the Rev. John Clifford and Mr. Corrie Grant. By means of what is called the Central Election Committee, these gentlemen virtually choose the "Progressive" candidates all over the metropolis. We are also informed that the bitterest opponents of the "secular education" policy, three years ago, was Mr. Graham Wallis, the well-known Fabian. We have always understood that Mr. Graham Wallis is as much an Atheist as Mr. Bernard Shaw. We presume, therefore, that he has a *political* motive in running counter to his own convictions. It will, however, be a good thing to give such gentlemen a lesson in November.

Mr. W. Heaford lectures in Victoria Park this evening (August 26). This is the last lecture of the season there. We hope the local "saints" will rally round Mr. Heaford in strong force on this occasion, as certain Christian Evidence people have made a point of disturbing his meetings with abusive interruptions.

Mr. T. Wilmot, secretary of the Camberwell Branch, 27 Lorimore-street, Walworth, is of opinion that Clapham Common offers a good field for Freethought propaganda. He is anxious to give open-air lectures a trial there during September. They would be arranged for Sunday afternoons. Mr. Wilmot would like to hear from local friends who would assist in "running" this station. If it proves a success, arrangements will be made to include it in the regular list next summer.

Mr. J. O. Bates, of the Vegetarian Stores, 42 Victoria-street, Gloucester, has a piece of boarding about eight feet by six outside some new premises he has just leased. It faces Victoria-street, where hundreds of workmen and other people pass by daily; and he intends to decorate it with a *Freethinker* weekly contents-sheet, and with specially good articles which he will cut out of the paper for that purpose. We are very much obliged to Mr. Bates, and we also beg to express our admiration for his courage.

Sky-Pilot Up a Tree.

The New York *Herald* prints the following from Huntington, Conn.:—

"The Rev. H. L. Hutchins, one of the religious census enumerators sent out by the Connecticut Bible Society to learn what proportion of the State's population attends church, took his statistics under difficulties yesterday afternoon. On reaching Walnut Tree Hill, a rural district of Huntington, he started to enter the door-yard of Mrs. Georgiana Hurd.

"'I know you! You can't question me! You're a public nuisance,' came a voice from a window. There was a rattling of chains behind the house, and a large bulldog dashed out at him. The Rev. Mr. Hutchins, though sixty-seven years old, was on the fence in a bound. Perched on the top, with his feet jammed between the pickets, he beseeched the woman to call off her dog. The latter was leaping up against the fence to reach the clergyman's trousers.

"Mrs. Hurd's daughter, Miss Lydia, appeared. She seized the dog's chain and tried to lead the animal away, but it refused to budge. Then the Rev. Mr. Hutchins calmly drew forth his portfolio and plied Miss Lydia with his list of questions, which she willingly answered, the dog all the while tugging at its chain.

"The questioning completed, the clergyman suggested that the chain be fastened to the fence. The dog was thus held, and the Rev. Mr. Hutchins lost no time in entering his carriage and driving off."

Notwithstanding.

Behold a man of smiles and smirks,
A little 'neath the middle height,
Who steadfastly for Jesus works
By shedding forth the gospel-light.
The Book of books he knows right through,
Christ's words are writ upon his heart;
But does he do as Christ would do?
Does he with all his fortune part?
I own, with optics tearful, dim,
He keeps it, notwithstanding Him!*

An aged rustic now behold,
Who rubs his hands in foolish glee,
And says: "The same good boy of old,
To go and send these things to me!
To think as me, as cannot write,
Should have a son, a real B.A.,
To love me now my hair is white,
And all the rest have passed away!"
Yes, Christ's disciple, proud and prim,
Loves father—notwithstanding Him!†

Behold one who no further looks
For love and honor than the sphere
Wherein he moves; whose sacred books
Are Nature's writings, bold and clear;
Who fears no furious Lord above,
Nor raging demon down below,
But lives to work, to help, to love,
And shrinks not when 'tis time to go.
Like those who preach Christ's doctrine grim,
He's happy—in ignoring him.‡

J. Y.

Biblical Plays.

If it be true that the Lord Chamberlain has refused a licence for a play in which Pilate and Mary Magdalene figure, he is merely carrying out the rule of his office. Only three or four years ago a licence was refused for Dr. Saint-Saëns' opera, *Samson et Dalila*, although the plot of the opera had little or nothing to do with the Old Testament narrative, it being in treatment practically like any other French operatic love story. Indeed, a hint was, it seems, thrown out that, if the title were altered to *Samuel and Jemima*, there might be no difficulty—a suggestion which greatly angered the composer. Rossini's *Mose in Egitto* had a very similar fate. When it was produced in England at the King's—afterwards Her Majesty's—Theatre in 1822, the libretto had to be entirely altered, and the title became *Peter the Hermit*. When it was revived at Covent Garden in 1850, it was called *Zora*, all Biblical names being suppressed. The Lord Chamberlain of 1847 was so particular that he even refused to license Meyerbeer's *Roberto il Diavolo* (although in an imperfect form it had been played in English under the title of *The Demon; or, The Mystic Branch*), alleging that "you might as well bring the Devil himself on the stage." His objection was only overcome by the intervention of a Royal Duke, who wished to see Jenny Lind make her London début in the principal part. The list, given in the *Era Almanack* of 1868, of nineteen plays, licence for which was refused between 1852 and 1865, includes—besides, of course, *Jack Sheppard*—*La Dame aux Camélias*, and that not very harmful play, *Le Père Prodigue*; with such semi-Biblical pieces as *The Hebrew Son* (Joseph and his Brethren), and *The Triumph of the Jewish Queen* (Esther).

—*Daily News*.

Obituary.

Mr. Richard Ellis, of 7 Allam-street, Oxford, died August 9, aged sixty-seven years. He was a staunch Freethinker, trying, whenever he could, to do something for the cause; always one of the first to subscribe to any fund for its good so far as his means would allow. He was a very great admirer of Ingersoll, and also of the late J. M. Wheeler. He passed peacefully away without any fear of death, after wishing his youngest daughter an affectionate "Good night."

* Matthew xix. 21. † Luke xiv. 26. ‡ Mark xvi. 16.

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Mary Church.

Ward of the Church.—Mary Church is the newly-baptised child of—nobody knows. Last week the tiny girl, excellently dressed, was found in St. Robert's Roman Catholic Church, Harrogate, and was taken to the police station, where she has been visited by many of the fashionable visitors to the town. Some of them have provided her with quite an extensive wardrobe. As no one has claimed authority over the child, she has been christened into the Roman Catholic Church, which will provide entirely for her upbringing.—*Paragraph in daily newspaper, August 13, 1900.*

The question is, Ought Miss Mary Church to be congratulated? She will always be sure of two outfits—one material and the other spiritual. If Miss Church's material costume is to be of the "charity" order—an ugly bonnet and a dismal skirt—I should deplore her Christian misfortune. At the same time, I should recognise the perfect logic of the situation. The Gospel is quite incongruous with elegance of dress. It may be doubted if a well-fitting bodice can harmonise with heavenly-mindedness; there are reasons which lend a powerful support to the thesis that such a bodice may be a positive obstacle to the normal evolution of piety. Even a neat shoe may prevent easy ascent of Jacob's ladder. From the orthodox point of view, therefore, the plainer the garments Miss Church is clothed in, the safer will be the prospects of her soul. However, I leave that problem to the priest and the milliner, and merely express the hope, in passing, that Miss Church's own feelings will be duly consulted.

The subject of Miss Church's spiritual clothes is very much more perplexing. The way our souls are managed at present is singular. Miss Church's mother (one may presume) arrayed the baby in elegant robe and cape, left her in a Roman Catholic place of worship, and thereupon, as if by a decree of the gods, the child is pre-ordained as a believer in Papal Infallibility, the Immaculate Conception, the authority of the Vulgate, and fifty other more or less trustworthy articles of faith. Had a shower of rain come on, or any little accident diverted the poor mother's steps, the baby might have been deposited in a Wesleyan chapel, grown up in a Methodist orphanage, and learned to adore the Love and Wisdom of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. Why should we be tossed to and fro between the creeds? Why should our intellectual destiny depend on the tumble of dice or the casting of lots? I am born in a certain longitude; I believe in the Trinity. Or I am born fifty degrees to the east or west, and I bow to Siva, or subscribe to the funds of the Calvinistic Baptists. Why should Miss Church—why should you and I—be at the mercy of geographical chance? That the latitude and longitude should affect one's color, diet, language, and household habits, I account as no grievance. But it is wrong that our interpretation of the universe—the most majestic function of which we are capable—should be distorted this way or that by the influence of local theologies, instead of framed on principles of the general human reason.

If I could educate Mary Church, I should develop her mind by three methods. I should lead her to appreciate three classes of facts—the facts of natural science, the facts of our racial history, and the facts of human nature. This triple knowledge is the birthright of every child. All else is secondary or useless.

By appreciation of the facts of natural science I mean such a knowledge of the external world as will render us alert to possibilities and dangers, critical of our environment, and capable of self-protection and self-direction. For the mere accumulation of items of science for the purpose of "first-class" or "honors" certificates I have not the smallest respect. We have suffered badly from the great South Kensington superstition. It makes me sick to hear silly lads talk of "passing" in chemistry or geology, as if a few months' reading and a few experiments and excursions had fitted them out with a complete wisdom of life. If certificates are necessary to livelihood, I have nothing to say against the effort spent in getting them. But I am speaking, not of livelihood, but of educational outfit and spiritual clothing. What we want to build up in each learner is the critical and observant habit. "Science" never gives us this habit; it is this habit which creates and formulates science. Free human thought preceded all sorts of chemistry, geology, astronomy, biology, etc. Therefore we must seek, not to inject into the memory a multitude of statements and figures, but to cultivate a power of rational judgment and practical apprehension. By all means teach chemistry and the sister sciences; but remember the aim and end of it all—to induce the mind to wonder, to reflect, and argue, and the hands to grasp and mould and pull and resist with deftness and alacrity.

Then as to the facts of racial history. A man who cannot remember is an idiot. A nation which cannot remember its past is savage. A nation which knows only its own annals is bigoted. We only become wise when we learn the history of our race; for then we see the unity of it all, the common emotions and hopes, the universal needs and abilities and faculties. How could I understand a village if I only knew its ploughmen? I must know also its carpenters, bakers, carriers, etc., its doctors and teachers, its social customs and trade. So, too, it is a poor training which only acquaints the learner with the records of England or the United States or France. He ought to see the growth of the whole race from barbarism to modern culture; the development of arts and sciences; the march of morality and literature. Some years ago, I think, many earnest reformers overdid the claims of science (*i.e.*, physical science). I believe Herbert Spencer has done so. Certainly we must have a discipline in organised knowledge of the facts of our natural environment. But this alone will not humanise us; this alone will only leave us calculators and measurers, not men and women. No man can ever reach real refinement and fulness of judgment who has not often turned back to study and love the story of his ancestors. I use the word "love" deliberately, in order to imply my contempt for that sort of learning which confines itself to chronology and details, and transmutes the splendid pages of human progress into a catalogue and an index.

Next, we must evolve an appreciation of the facts of human nature. The learner must first understand his own body, and its offices of digestion, sex, activity, and repose. Having acquainted himself with the prime functions of the physical machine, he follows up the process of thought and feeling, of logic and motive. It is essential to a sound education to include a comprehension of the springs of conduct. Our disappointments and amazements would be reduced to a minimum if we were all trained to notice and analyse the chief mental and moral characteristics of our neighbors. We should know better why they sinned, and more readily forgive; we should know better where their strength or weakness lies, and more effectively assist; we should know better the probable course of their action, and more accurately prepare. In other words, this knowledge would help in the rational organisation of sympathy, law, and politics.

I fear Mary Church will not get her due share of these three departments of education. But I am quite sure she would become a much more loveable and useful woman—and wife, and mother—if the Catholic divines of Harrogate would pursue the line I have indicated.

F. J. Gould.

What Christ Might Have Done.

The Bible has not civilised mankind. A book that establishes and defends slavery and wanton war is not calculated to soften the hearts of those who believe implicitly that it is the work of God. A book that not only permits, but commands, religious persecution has not, in my judgment, developed the affectional nature of man. Its influence has been bad, and bad only. It has filled the world with bitterness, revenge, and crime, and retarded in countless ways the progress of our race.....Would it not have been better if Christ had told his disciples that they must not persecute? that they had no right to destroy their fellow men? that they must not put heretics in dungeons or destroy them with flames? that they must not invent and use instruments of torture? that they must not appeal to brutality, nor endeavor to sow with bloody hands the seeds of peace? Would it not have been better had he said: "I come not to bring a sword, but peace"? Would not this have saved countless cruelties and countless lives?—*Ingersoll.*

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A Lovable God.

Then said another: "Some there are who tell
Of One who threatens he will toss to hell
The luckless pots he marred in making. Pish!
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well!"
—Omar Khayyam, A.D. 1260.

As an Atheist, I have long thought that the only lovable and workable God is that created by our witty and wise neighbors across the Channel. The old omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Deity, "creator of all woe and sin," beloved of their forebears, was extinguished a century and a half ago by Diderot and his fellow Encyclopedists. Monsieur l'Etre, indeed, had little chance of surviving the analysis of that daring, original, and profound band of thinkers. But your typical Frenchman is not the sort of man to forego any luxury which is not terribly indigestible; so, although no longer able to digest mentally the conception of M. l'Etre, he found that it was by no means impossible to provide a wholly harmless and good-working substitute, and to that end he created *Le Bon Dieu*, of all French creations one of the most charming I know. This good God of our neighbors is no bloodthirsty ogre creating a hell and fitting it up with a chief roaster, assisted by a host of bakers, stokers, basters, trussers, turnspits, and many others, and then cramming it full of his wretched creatures foreseen from all eternity as, and created purposely for, flesh for hell's gridirons.

On the contrary, it is not even certain that *Le Bon Dieu* had much of a hand in "the creation" at all. Indeed, his creator created him in the likeness of a magnified *bon homme*, eternally benevolent, and, as far as his powers go, ever beneficent. He has no touch of bitterness or even austerity, and, if reproached by his French creator for letting things get sadly out of gear at times, apologetically replies:—

> "My dear man, it's not my fault a bit; don't, for goodness sake, blame me! Nothing makes me so miserable as to see you unhappy. Why, my sole occupation is that of ameliorating your lot wherever and whenever I can. Look what I've done for you! All the good things you enjoy are my gift. Over the bad things I've little or no control. I didn't make 'em, and I can't mend 'em or end 'em. But I give you such compensation as I can—lovely lasses, generous wine, a pleasant land, good humor—the best of all gifts—and a sly wit. I know you are afflicted with ills, but they are none of my devising; true, I made the sun to ripen your grapes. In this I was not altogether successful, and I apologise; but the natural intractibility of things was too much for my complete success in this as in so many other matters, and, although it causes famine now and then, and even sunstroke, is perhaps one of its smallest violences. Yet look on the vine, and think kindly of me for that! Women are sweet and children delightful, and their sweetness and delightfulness are my work. True, the sweet may turn acrid, and the delightfulness may become ungrateful; but these, again, are evils for which I am not responsible. I did my best for you—I never do less—but neither the material on which I worked, nor the powers which I possess, enabled me to make any perfect thing. Only this I claim: that whatever of good there is in a man, woman, or child, that good comes from me, and whatever pleasure their lives achieve is with my help. In fact, I am Le Bon Dieu, and nothing else, and don't you forget it; but when you next have your sweetheart in your arms, kiss her and take her kisses, for you can worship me in no pleasanter way."

Our Frenchman accepts this explanation and installs *Le Bon Dieu* in his heart. When trouble comes to him he's sorry for himself and for the good God who was unable, though intensely desirous, to forestall it. And with this cheerful, jolly God our neighbors keep on the best of terms. "God damn you!" is an English oath; the Frenchman does not believe that *Le Bon Dieu* would damn anybody, "not even a priest," as one of their wicked wits said. "Go to hell!" is another English oath. Your Frenchman does not believe in the existence of such a place, and would never be so rude as to consign anyone to it. Even so far as two centuries back it was a faded nightmare among the educated, for a certain naughty lady, of aristocratic birth, being told that, for her sins, she would probably go to hell, replied: "Do not fear, Monseigneur, the Almighty cannot afford to damn a person of quality!"

A very brotherly God is *Le Bon Dieu*—one we can walk arm in arm with, sure of warm sympathy, and a willing listener and sensible adviser. No threatener and destroyer he! Indeed, the Gaul has become largely an eclectic Manichean, retaining only the good principle and rejecting the evil—imputing the latter to the unintelligent obstinacy of things; a nuisance, an infliction at times, but no bluggy bogie wilfully seeking whom he may devour.

You may urge that, philosophically, this is not a very intelligent creation, this *Bon Dieu* of our friends across the Straits! Perhaps you're right; but no other God yet created is a whit more intelligent, while not any other God is half so good to live with. The Frenchman dwells companionably with *his Bon Dieu*, with much cheerful camaraderie. But what of our strife-breeding, hell-manufacturing, sin-creating, pain-and-disease inflicting deity? Can we really claim that our horrible creation is either companionable and humorous or wholly benevolent, and as far as possible to him, *the omnipotent*, wholly beneficent? *Je pense que non!* The Frenchman's good God does not keep him awake at night bewailing his sins and sweating with terror at the idea of a Christian hell. "Surging, crammed with all the torments of the damned." Not a bit of it. *Au contraire*, he, the lucky Gaul, falls asleep, dreaming of the next good thing *Le Bon Dieu* will, whenever he can, bestow on him. Lucky Frenchman! Jolly *Bon Dieu!*

Omarist.

Moses the "Boxer."

In order to show that the Chinese are far behind the age, even in warfare, the New York *Sun* quotes the thirty-first chapter of the book of Numbers, descriptive of methods prevailing in the time of Moses, or some 1,450 years before Christ. The story which the *Sun* quotes is as follows:—

> "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
> "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites; afterwards shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.
> "And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian.
> "Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war.
> "So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.
> "And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.
> "And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses, and they slew all the males.
> "And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain—namely, Evi and Rekem, and Zur and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian; Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword.
> "And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods.
> "And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.
> "And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts.
> "And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab; which are by Jordan, near Jericho.
> "And Moses and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp.
> "And Moses was wrath with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle.
> "And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive?
> "Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.
> "Now, therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.
> "But all the women children that have not known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves."

Hereupon it is commented that the Chinese, in their reported massacres of foreigners, women, and children, no less than men, and in their refusal to give any quarter to prisoners, are simply following and preserving the

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usages of warfare of the time of Moses. Since that day the humanity of Christendom has come to revolt against such mercilessness, but the civilisation of China is still the same in spirit as it was in the Shang dynasty of the time when Moses wreaked so horrible a vengeance on the Midianites. We are thus carried back nearly four thousand years by the events now occurring in China. It must be remembered that the Israelites who killed all the men and all the mothers and all the male children of Midian were not an irresponsible mob. They were not a lot of rebels under the lead of an outlaw, but were soldiers carrying out the orders of their highest official, Moses, the law-giver.

Admitting that Chinese soldiers might claim as spoil the daughters of the foreigners they had massacred, would the Chinese priests demand a share of the plunder as described in that part of the chapter of Numbers which the *Sun* omitted to print? Moreover, if the soldiers neglected to slaughter and outrage, would they be rebuked by a wrathful commander, as occurred to the soldiers of Moses? (Num. xxxi. 14-18). Let us quote further from the inspired account dictated by the God of the people whom the Chinese are reported to have massacred:—

> "And divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation.
> "And levy a tribute unto the Lord of the men of war which went out to battle; one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep.
> "Take it of their half, and give it unto Eleazar the priest, for an heave offering of the Lord.
> "And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty, of the persons, of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts, and give them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle of the Lord.
> "And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord commanded Moses.
> "And the booty, being the rest of the prey which the men of war had caught, was six hundred thousand and seventy thousand and five thousand sheep.
> "And threescore and twelve thousand beeves.
> "And threescore and one thousand asses.
> "And thirty and two thousand persons in all, of women that had not known man by lying with him.
> "And the half, which was the portion of them that went out to war, was in number three hundred thousand and seven and thirty thousand and five hundred sheep.
> "And the Lord's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and threescore and fifteen.
> "And the beeves were thirty and six thousand; of which the Lord's tribute was threescore and twelve.
> "And the asses were thirty thousand and five hundred; of which the Lord's tribute was threescore and one.
> "And the persons were sixteen thousand; of which the Lord's tribute was thirty and two persons."

To clearly demonstrate that Chinese warfare is as barbarous as that commanded by Jehovah, it would be necessary to prove that after the Chinese have won a battle the priests get a percentage of the captured virgins, as nowadays chaplains share prize money with the crews of warships.

We sometimes hear the slaughter of the Midianites defended on the ground that they were immoral—that they indulged in idolatrous and obscene rites; but how much morality could they learn from a people, albeit God's chosen, who worshipped Jehovah, and, in the language of our early historians, "reserved women for a fate worse than death"?

In point of fact, Chinese warfare on foreigners, so far from being as barbarous as that ordered by Jehovah, is probably no more atrocious than the wars of Christians on heathens a few centuries ago. How did foreigners of both sexes fare at the hands of the Crusaders?

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

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Correspondence.

CHRISTIAN FALSEHOODS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—I am afraid I cannot compliment Mr. Tabrum on his defence of Messrs. Farrar, Horton, and Clifford. He tells us that Dean Farrar did not mean that the writers referred to used the words he quoted; the references were given as having a bearing on the subject. Will Mr. Tabrum inform us what bearing Tacitus has on the matter? He does not, in the chapter quoted, even mention Roman women, good or ill, and cannot, therefore, have a "bearing on the general subject." Tertullian also has absolutely no bearing whatever on the matter. And Suetonius can only be cited as proving that a deal of immorality existed, as one might quote a current attack on society.

Now for Dr. Horton. The report of the sermon was contained in the *Christian World Pulpit*, and, unless I am misinformed, proofs are sent to the gentlemen whose sermons are reported week by week. I assume, therefore, the sermon appeared with "his knowledge and sanction," and represented him faithfully. At any rate, the report has never been challenged by Mr. Horton, although he knew it was made the subject of criticism, as a copy of the *Freethinker* containing my article was forwarded to him. Until Dr. Horton repudiates the report, I must decline to modify my language in the smallest degree.

Next, Mr. Tabrum's opinion, that Dr. Clifford's ranking Darwin as a typical Christian leader will "bear full and honest criticism," is of small value to me. The man who will classify Charles Darwin, who deliberately rejected Christianity both in general and in detail, and who avowed himself as an Agnostic, as a "typical Christian," is slandering the name of a dead man, and might fitly be used as the object of the little homily which Mr. Tabrum devotes to one who repudiates such conduct.

C. Cohen.

"SHAKESPEARE: THE MAN."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—I am of opinion that you ascribe to Shakespeare a scope touching human ethics which he would take exception to if he read the above article. Because of his great intellect, it is certain, to judge from his writings, that he never presumed to establish a parallelism between *all nature* and human nature, the outcome of which resulted in the establishment of the great principle of moral causation. All his characters work out their own destiny, unaware of any moral finality, and I challenge you to show that any of them were actuated by any other motives but those incarnated in their individual substance *by all nature*.

I am prepared to admit, beyond dispute, that Shakespeare has had the genius of wording men's thoughts in most forcible renderings, but I am at a loss to find the basis of any system of morals in them. Even yourself, if you take the trouble to confront your conclusions consistently with the allegation that "the vast bulk of the British public are ignorant of Shakespeare's works," must admit that. "The great bases he laid for eternity" have not made the world-man better than he was.

Literary men of all grades and races are rather prone to ventilate beyond measure the practical value of their pens. It must be said of Shakespeare that he divested himself of moralistic tendency; he was content to put into impersonation the world and the under-world of his time; but never in a single instance did he award a transcendental success in the life of his personages because he deemed them better than they should be according to their temperament.

On all hands it must be granted that he was a faithful historian of his time, a monument for all ages, for men who are seeking through what vicissitudes men's minds have been passing; beyond that I can see no peg on which a universal moral law can be attached; yet I am hopeful that in your concluding article you may open my eyes to facts which shall make or alter my views, being always open to conviction.

T. Faulks.

"THE BIBLE AND A FUTURE LIFE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—I cannot believe you would wish to misrepresent those who differ from you. Permit me, then, to say that your article, "The Bible and a Future Life," very gravely mistakes Christian opinion respecting its quotations from Ecclesiastes. Such teaching, though in Scripture, we deny to be the doctrine of Scripture. Ecclesiastes relates how Solomon, despite unique advantages, failed to get happiness in the world; and it also records what were his musings on fate and destiny when for a season abandoned to the stupidity of the fallen heart. These musings are infallibly recorded, just as are the lies whereby Satan deceived Adam and Eve. But neither can be called the inspired teaching of Scripture. The distinction is obvious. As I have often observed the error of Mr. Symes in "Freethought" publications, I beg to send you this short remonstrance. On the principle of treating others as you would be treated by them, I hope you will be good enough to insert this letter from a clerical subscriber.

Henry J. Alcock, M.A.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

West London Branch ("Victory," Newnham-street, Queen's-street, Edgware-road): August 28, at 9, Business meeting.

Open-air Propaganda.

Station-road (Camberwell): 11.30, C. Cohen.

Peckham Rye: 3.15, C. Cohen.

Brockwell Park: 3.15, F. A. Davies; 6, Freethought Demonstration.

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, W. J. Needs.

Kilburn (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, E. Pack.

Hammersmith (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.

Finsbury Park: 3.30, A lecture.

Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, W. Heaford.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Fruits of Christianity"; 7.15, A lecture. August 29, at 8.15, A lecture.

Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, A lecture.

West Ham Branch (Stratford Grove): 7.30, A lecture.

Battersea Park Gates: 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

Kingsland (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, E. Pack.

COUNTRY.

Birmingham Branch (in the Bull Ring): 11, H. Percy Ward; 7 (Prince of Wales' Assembly Rooms, Broad-street), H. Percy Ward, "The Story of the Trial and Imprisonment of G. W. Foote for Blasphemy." Mr. Ward will also lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8—weather permitting.

Liverpool: Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. Closed until September 2. Outdoor lectures at the Monument, bottom of London-road, on August 26, at 7 p.m., Stanley Jones.

Newcastle-on-Tyne (1 Grainger-street): 3, Members' Monthly Meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—August 26, m., Station-road; a. Peckham Rye.

Arthur B. Moss, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—August 26, m., Mile End.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—August 26, Birmingham. September 2, Glasgow; 10, Debate at Bradford. 16, Birmingham. October 1 and 2, Debate at Birmingham. December 9, Glasgow.

F. A. Davies, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—August 26, a. and e., Brockwell Park. September 2, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 9, Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—NO. 35. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Decline of Religion.

IT was, I think, Comte who said that the age of fetishism was the creative period of religious activity. Qualifying the statement with the remark that the fetishistic type of mind is more or less present in every period, the dictum may be accepted as substantially correct. The real living period of religious belief is that when the untrained mind reads itself frankly into nature and pictures the whole known universe as an agglomeration of living forces. Beyond this religion lives, but it can hardly be said to create. It continues to exist, but its existence involves a continuous struggle with adverse forces, before which it steadily loses ground. Above the fetishistic state the history of religion is the history of a series of modifications, apologies, retreats, and defeats. In every branch of science it has been ignominiously beaten back, and the defeat has been all the more decisive because each step of the way has been hotly contested. Even its temporary successes have only been a regaining of a portion of its losses. If it gained one convert, it had previously lost a score, and in any honest attempt to balance profit and loss there would be found a heavy balance on the losing side.

The clergy deal with this unpleasant historic process in various manners. The more foolish amongst them simply deny the fact, and point to the growth of a religious organisation here and there as evidence in favor of their attitude, quite ignoring that these movements have grown at the expense of other churches, and that their general effect on the non-Christian world is *nil*. Others accept the process, talk glibly about religious evolution, and profess to find in the multiplication of sects and the wearing down of definite religious dogmas a fresh proof of God's education of the human race. God is slowly educating the world to a knowledge of himself and his wishes, and we must overlook the imperfections of the earlier stages in view of the perfection of the completed result. On what grounds an all-wise and all-powerful Deity can be justified in sacrificing myriads of human beings in the past for the benefit of a much smaller number in the distant future, when the desired result might have been produced at once, it is not clear. One can understand and appreciate the stumbles of an individual; he or she reaps in after life the benefit of the experience; but, from the standpoint of Theism, the blunderings of earlier races, from which later ones derive benefits, are a useless and avoidable sacrifice.

Other clergymen, of a more honest, if more pessimistic, type, admit that there is a decline in religious belief, and content themselves with offering suggestions as to how interest may be reawakened. To this class belongs the Rev. G. W. Allen, vicar of Thornton Steward, Yorks., who, in a sermon preached in Ripon Cathedral on "The Declining Interest in Religion," raised a doleful lament over the religious degeneracy of the age. Doctrines are losing their hold upon people, and, in practice, Christianity is a dead letter. "If any man announces that he will not go to church, and disbelieves the Bible, and will no longer profess and call himself a Christian, we are shocked.....But if some professing Christian spreads some damaging story about a brother Christian, we are scarcely moved. If a Christian presses some private and personal advantage against another which our half-heathen legal code does not absolutely forbid him, we are not moved at all. The great thing with us is evidently the uniform—the outward profession. So long as a man calls himself a Christian he may drive a hard bargain, underpay his workpeople, grind his tenants, defend guilt, attack innocence, and manifest, in every department of life, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness." This much has been said over and over again in these columns, but it is always pleasing to get such admission from the enemy.

Having chronicled the decline, Mr. Allen turns to a consideration of the causes. His explanation is beautifully simple, but not very sound. Buddhism, he notes, has "the great glory that it has never shed one drop of blood in the course of its enormous propaganda"—a somewhat striking contrast to the history presented by Christianity. On the other hand, "We Christians have come to feel, first that those of other religions are not only mistaken, but wicked; next, this feeling extends itself even to such as called themselves Christians, but differ from us in point of doctrine." Consequently, in England, "as soon as men begin to discuss religion they quarrel"; but in the East "nothing is more charming than the interest which intelligent Buddhists take in discussing religion with intelligent Christians—an interest which is exceeded only by the result of the extreme courtesy and gentleness with which they conduct the discussion and present their own point of view."

The quotation is, I think, well worth making, because of the amusing admission that, while the result of Christianity is that people cannot be trusted to discuss religion because they quarrel, the effect of Buddhism is that its followers discuss religion with "extreme courtesy and gentleness," besides having a history unstained by a single act of persecution. The quotation is interesting, too, because of its truth. Taking society generally, one finds people discussing questions of science, literature, or politics in a perfectly amicable and friendly spirit. It is when one touches on religion that the surface of the waters is ruffled. Springing from the savage, uncivilised nature of man, religious beliefs easily break through the thin veneer of civilisation worn by their possessor, and betray their origin in the feelings which they arouse and to which they appeal.

The conclusion at which Mr. Allen arrives is that, as a discussion of religion has been generally found to create animosity, it has been tabooed, with the result that the "faculty"—whatever that may happen to be—has dwindled away. But, as a matter of fact, the tabooing of religion in society is a fact of quite recent growth, and is a symptom of the state, not its cause. The discussion of questions of religion went on as heartily in the West as in the East, until certain conditions, to be noted presently, rendered their discussion "stale, flat, and unprofitable." People have not left off talking about religion because it created ill-feeling, but because the drift of modern civilisation makes it more and more a thing apart from their every-day lives.

The just-issued address of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference comes much nearer the true state of things in the following note on the spread of Secularism:—

> "For in Secularism—not its theory, indeed, but its temper and habit—our chief danger lies both within and without the Church. It is not so much this doctrine or that, this institution of our faith or that, which is imperilled, but religion in its very being. With multitudes of the peoples of Christian Europe, God and the eternal are mere nonentities. Art and science, literature and the press, the great instruments and factors of civilised life, are largely un-Christian in their animus. The secular atmosphere that we breathe in this age of universal intercourse is laden with the infection of materialism; it has spread an impalpable haze over all

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things divine, and thrown out a heat and glare of sensuous excitement that penetrate our most sheltered circles."

One may overlook the sinister implication of the "infection" of Materialism and the "sensuous" excitement created by modern life, in the appreciation of the clear and distinct issue raised. The passage contains in a nutshell the real cause of the decline of the interest in religious subjects, in sharp contrast to Mr. Allen's fanciful reasonings on the subject. Religious beliefs are not threatened specially by a discovery here or there so much as they are threatened by the whole tendency of modern life. Art, science, and literature develop when not in direct antagonism to religious beliefs; at least, in complete independence of them. The last question that any contemporary scientist would dream of putting to himself on the eve of an important discovery would be its bearings on religion. The member of Parliament who based his support or opposition to a proposed measure upon purely religious grounds would be voted a fossil by a large majority of his fellow-members. So far as the press supports religion, it does so because it is crystallised in institutions, not because it represents sincere intellectual conviction. In the words of the address from which I have quoted, we live in a "secular atmosphere," and against its influence all struggling is more or less hopeless.

There is one more sentence in the address that is highly suggestive. "The old seclusion and separateness are broken down," it remarks; and this circumstance is far from unimportant in the consideration of the decline of religion. So long as people are isolated they are local in their sympathies, intolerant in their opinions, undeveloped in their nature; in a word, religious. The villager clings to his religious beliefs with far greater tenacity than the townsman, the agriculturalist than the artizan. The most powerful cause of the survival of the Jewish religion has undoubtedly been the persecution to which its votaries have been subjected. They have been shut out from a large part of the civilisation around them, compelled to seek within their own communion for the social fellowship they were denied elsewhere, living for generations a class apart from their fellows; and this very "exclusion and separateness" has preserved a religion that might otherwise have long since disappeared. It is the same with all forms of religious belief. Keep it clear from intercourse with other forms of religious belief, and you may retain its strength; place it in constant intercourse with different forms, and its influence inevitably grows weaker.

But this separateness is no longer possible. English Protestants cannot go on regarding Continental Catholics as monsters of iniquity when the press, and the thousand and one different methods of international intercourse, furnish ample proof that, given an identity of other conditions, human nature in either Church is pretty much alike. Educated Christians cannot continue to look on other religions as "not only mistaken, but wicked," when each year brings fresh proofs of how much Christianity is indebted to these other religions, that they embody the same ideas, and have sprung from the same conditions. For a time apologists may postpone the inevitable end by pleading that all these religions have caught glimpses of a truth that Christianity possesses in full measure; but, in the long run, comparative mythology gives Christianity its proper place as one of many forms of religious delusion, while the science of anthropology shows the primitive human conditions from which all these delusions have originated.

After all, the defenders of religion are fighting more than an individual or a society of individuals. An individual may be crushed, a society may be exterminated; but who can resist the slow, corrosive action of thousands of almost impalpable forces, all combining towards a given end? Mrs. Partington's endeavor to sweep back the Atlantic with a broom was child's-play compared to the task of trying to stop the march of civilisation with a sermon, or dam the stream of discovery with a text. Men and women have not lost their interest in religion easily or lightly. Their rejection has often been a process that has been fought against strongly, and only completed by sheer pressure of intellectual and social developments. They have discovered, at the cost of hard experience, the truth of the bitter lament, "God does nothing"; that all they had, and all that they could hope for, had been, and must be, secured by human industry and human intelligence. "The declining interest in religion" is only the finishing touches to a process that commenced with the earliest questionings of religious doctrines. Men die of many diseases, religions principally of one—that of being found out. And men are finding out religion, its uselessness, its artificiality, its ruinous and wasteful expenditure of time and energy that might be usefully spent in the higher interests of the race.

C. COHEN.

Shakespeare: The Man.—III.

HIS VIEWS ON LIFE AND DEATH.

WE should like to follow Mr. Goldwin Smith through several other applications of his criteria, particularly as to Shakespeare's social and political leanings, and more especially as to his view of the natural and inevitable relation of the sexes. But we feel that our review must now be concluded, and we desire to devote the whole of this instalment of it to Shakespeare's views on life and death. This is a subject, no doubt, on which it is possible for different persons to hold a great variety of opinions. Just as Shakespeare has been shown to have followed a considerable number of trades and professions—which is a tribute to the universality of his information—so he has been argued to have been a Roman Catholic, a member of the Church of England, and a Nonconformist. Our own opinion, for which reasons will be given presently, is that he was neither. Some of the principal commentators have noticed, with regret and even with dismay, what they are pleased to call the levity with which he too often treats religious topics. Gifford, the zealous editor of Ben Jonson, called Shakespeare the coryphæus of profanity. He certainly put into the mouths of clowns and fools, for whom he could claim a traditional license, some remarkable thrusts at the tenets of the Christian religion. We intend to elaborate this point in our projected work on Shakespeare. For the present it must suffice to call the reader's attention to it. Those who have read the plays carefully will recollect many instances. We must likewise remark that more than one commentator has dwelt upon the great poet's scepticism. Mr. Green, the historian, for instance, admits that he stood outside all Churches and outside all religion. It will be apparent, therefore, that we are far from being alone in our opinion of Shakespeare's religious (or irreligious) convictions.

Mr. Goldwin Smith is very certain that Shakespeare was not a Nonconformist. He threw ridicule upon the Puritans. "Least of all," Mr. Smith says, "can it be maintained that Shakespeare was a Roman Catholic." His noble presentation of the friar in *Romeo and Juliet* only shows that he was "a large-minded artist." He was true to nature, and he knew that there were good as well as bad and indifferent in the army of priests and monks. Elsewhere he makes a character speak of something being as fit "as the nun's lips to the friar's mouth," and a host of similar things might be quoted if we had room for them. We are also glad to hear Mr. Goldwin Smith declare his view that "The ghost and the purgatory in *Hamlet* are evidently a mere part of the fiction." This is true all round. The supernatural in Shakespeare is mere stage machinery. It is never allowed to interfere really with the natural development of the plot and characters, or to precipitate a catastrophe. Even in *Hamlet*, where the ghost appears so decisively, as a superficial reader might easily imagine, it will be found on a close examination that it does not actually hasten the natural progress of events. Further, we beg the reader to note that the supernatural which Shakespeare uses as stage machinery is never distinctively Christian. He introduces no angels or devils. Ghosts, fairies, and fates—for such are the so-called witches in *Macbeth*—belong to the immemorial primitive superstition of mankind; and, instead of being distinctively Christian, are distinctively anti-Christian.

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Mr. Goldwin Smith says we may "safely" take it that Shakespeare was "a Conformist." But we may just as "safely" take the opposite. Whether he was a church-goer, Mr. Goldwin Smith says, we have "no means of telling." Nor does it very much matter. He may have gone to church to please his wife, or his relatives and friends, or to divert attention from his own convictions in an age when heresy was so dangerous. He was not an apostle, and could hardly be expected to graduate as a martyr. "Atheistical or irreligious," our author declares, "he evidently was not. His general spirit is religious." But this is a matter of opinion, and other critics have taken a very different view. What does Mr. Goldwin Smith mean by "religious"? If he defined the word, or his use of it, we might discuss the matter. But in the absence of definition we might simply answer what he would assure us that he never meant. For, at this time of day, the word "religious" has contracted a dangerous ambiguity.

After referring to the turbulence of that age in the religious sphere, Mr. Goldwin Smith remarks that difference of opinion on the gravest questions was not confined to the Catholics and Protestants.

> "Religious controversies and wars had not failed to produce their natural effect in breeding among men of more daring spirit, or perhaps more libertine lives, total scepticism or indifference to religion. Among the Bohemians of the theatre this tendency was likely to prevail. Marlowe is maligned as a blatant atheist, an utterer of horrible and damnable opinions, who had written a book against the Trinity and defamed Christ. The imputation was extended to other Bohemians."

Reference is then made to Giordano Bruno, the great Freethought martyr, whose odyssey as a hunted heretic included a visit to England. He found much to disgust him at Oxford.

> "But in London he found to his satisfaction comparative freedom of thought and speech. A circle, of which Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Fulke Greville were the chiefs, and of which Bruno was a member, discussed questions of science and philosophy with closed doors. So far as social position was concerned, Shakespeare might possibly have found his way into that circle."

One would like to know that Shakespeare and Bruno really met in London. Each would have felt the other's greatness. And what a thought, that the world's supreme poet had clasped the hand of the world's supreme martyr!

We have another quotation to make from Mr. Goldwin Smith. When he comes to Shakespeare's views of life and death, he is compelled to write as follows:—

> "When Shakespeare touches the problem of human existence or that of the world to come, we cannot help feeling that we are in contact with a mind more like that of Giordano Bruno, or rather that of the Elizabethan liberals, than that of an orthodox Anglican Divine. The soliloquy in *Hamlet* presents nothing sceptical; yet it and Hamlet's general utterances are pervaded by the spirit of one to whom the state of man, present and future, is an unsolved mystery. We do not know 'in that sleep of death what dreams may come.' The world beyond the grave is 'the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns.' To die is to 'go we know not where.' 'We are such stuff as dreams are made on; and our little life is rounded with a sleep.' This globe of ours, 'like an unsubstantial pageant, will vanish and leave not a wreck [rack?] behind.' That Shakespeare himself speaks in such passages cannot be affirmed, but may surely, without much improbability, be divined."

We think this is true as far as it goes. We also think it is far from being the whole truth. It seems to us that it can be *proved* that Shakespeare himself speaks in such passages. The very same sentiments about life and death are assigned to all his characters who are distinguished by intellectual power. Differ as they may in other respects; let them be mild or daring, noble or wicked, scrupulously just or recklessly ambitious; if they possess *intellect* they all speak essentially the same language in regard to death. Hamlet speaks like Macbeth, and Prospero like Cæsar. It may, of course, be replied that Shakespeare, as a great dramatic artist, only made these lofty ones speak in character. But that comes to the very same thing in the end. It implies that Shakespeare felt those sceptical sentiments about "the great perhaps" to be appropriate to men of powerful intelligence. And what is that, at bottom, but a confession that those sentiments were his own?

No person in the whole gallery of Shakespeare's creations ever derives the least consolation from the thought of an after-life. More than one shrink from it in apprehension and terror. Shakespeare had looked into the great abyss, when the sun was shining and in the silent watches of the night, and he saw within it the doom of all mortality. That he was, nevertheless, the great poet of the joy of life, only proves that his colossal genius was wedded to invincible sanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christianity Unscientific.

IN my remarks upon the Christian and Scientist, which appeared in these columns last week, I showed that those who accept the revelations of modern science cannot at the same time be consistent believers in Christianity. I now propose to adduce additional proof that the Christian faith is thoroughly unscientific.

Science means verified truth; therefore all scientists must reject the Christian teaching of a general resurrection at the judgment day. To verify such teaching is, of course, impossible. The belief in it is based upon a conjecture which is at variance with scientific knowledge. For instance, it is now an admitted fact that the quantity of matter is always the same, and that after death the materials of which our bodies are composed will be used for other purposes. If this is so, the bodies cannot reappear at the supposed resurrection, inasmuch as their component parts will have been transformed to other forms of existence. A recent writer has put the case thus: "If all the human beings that have ever existed in the world have to rise again in their bodily form at the 'day of judgment,' it is quite certain that they cannot appear unless all the matter of their bodies can be found; and it is equally certain that the mass of matter composing the whole human race from first to last would exceed many times over the total quantity of matter on this earth of which the human body is composed. Organic matter is used over and over again in the formation of living bodies, so that, in raising the dead, it will be found that the same matter has gone towards the formation of countless human creatures. *Neither the same bodies, nor an equal number, can, therefore, ever exist again.* That is quite certain; and it effectually disposes of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body."

Of course, the orthodox Christian can fall back upon the theory of miracles, but the scientist, as such, cannot, for his science admits of no departure from natural causation. Whatever idea is attached to the term "miracle," it cannot be accepted by the scientist as something which interferes with the natural order of events. If it be said that a miracle is the effect of a supernatural cause, the scientist is unable to accept the statement, because, if it were true, it does not admit of scientific proof. He considers that any extraordinary event should be inquired into, and, if possible, compared with others. He does not designate all so-called miracles as intended falsehoods, for he is willing to grant that the notion of miracles might have had its origin in the imperfections of the human mind. We know from experience that the birth, life, and death of human beings depend upon natural conditions. The variations in the lives of those who are termed the upper, middle, and lower classes attest the existence of different causes producing different results. To me it appears inconceivable that a God who is all-good, all-wise, and all-powerful should allow such varied and opposite conditions to obtain as now exist among the rich and poor. On the one hand there are wealth and comfort, and on the other poverty and suffering. Now, the scientist recognises the fact that societarian affairs are regulated by natural and economic causes, and not by any supernatural Providence in which Christians profess to believe. He must, therefore, if he is consistent, reject at least this feature of the Christian belief.

But the scientist not only excludes the supposed supernatural from the ordinary affairs of every-day life,

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he also recognises the reign of natural law in intellectual and moral operations. He has learnt that reliance upon the "stability of natural law" forms the basis of general calculations in providing for man's future comfort and advancement. Our commercial, educational, and legislative enterprises are all carried on upon the belief in the regularity of nature's functions. Persons secure insurance policies upon their lives and property as though no causes were in operation that could affect them injuriously, except those that can be calculated upon. This is thoroughly opposed to the Christian teaching of "special Providence," and the capricious interference of a God in human affairs. The Bible records numerous instances where the known laws of nature were said to have been set aside, and where, in answer to prayer, the very opposite results happened to those which might have been expected from the operations of the regular order of nature. (See Genesis xx. 7; Exodus viii. 12 and 13; Numbers xi. 1 and 2; 1 Samuel i. 10-20; and James i. 5; v. 13, 15, 17, and 18.) No scientist can believe that what is stated in the passages here referred to is true, and therefore he cannot be a Christian. Furthermore, science teaches that there cannot be two opposite predominating forces operating at the same time in nature. If the one prevail, the other must be subordinate. The orthodox Christian alleges that the world is governed by a God and a Devil, both of whom are supposed to have unlimited power in influencing human actions. From a scientific standpoint, this dual existence is incredible. The reality of a personal Devil is as clearly taught in the Bible as that of a personal Deity; but no scientist at the present day would risk his reputation by avowing his belief in the existence of his Satanic Majesty.

It may be alleged that we have no right to say what a scientist may or may not believe. Upon some questions this may be so; but it does not apply to scientific subjects. The inductive method, the law of cause and effect, and the process by which scientific truth can properly be established, are generally considered as beyond dispute. Hence, while we may not be able to determine in every instance what a scientist should believe, we can safely say that, if he is consistent, he cannot accept as true that which is opposed to the demonstrations of science. Probably it will be urged that a scientist may be excused for accepting beliefs inconsistent with known facts, upon the ground that he is compelled to adopt such a course by the conditions of society. We read that Darwin confessed that in his early life the theological notions then prevailing induced him to adopt terms implying the very opposite to the conclusions at which his scientific studies caused him to arrive. In the case of Lyell and Hugh Miller the retarding influence of theology is said to have produced painful consequences. It should, however, be remembered that scientists are but men, and, like Christians, are amenable to the general conditions which affect our common nature. Moreover, the same intellectual discrimination which is shown in reference to scientific truths may not be so manifest when applied to religious subjects. The truth of this was illustrated by Newton and Faraday. Newton, when writing on prophecy, was a very different man intellectually than when he dealt with the law of gravitation; and Faraday, when talking to a congregation of a class of obscure Dissenters, differed widely from the able expounder of chemistry, which undoubtedly he was. It by no means follows that, because a man is great in one line of thought, he is equally so upon all questions to which he directs his attention. This was evident in the case of Gladstone as a statesman and as a theologian. The same may be said of Wallace and Crookes. In matters of science these two men rely upon demonstration, but in theories of speculation they are content to rest on emotional belief.

To sum up. The scientist relies upon nature and her manifold potentialities; upon the stability of natural law as the basis of all his calculations; upon the belief in the indestructibility of matter and force; upon the theory of evolution; and, finally, upon the fact that belief is the result of evidence, the validity of which can be tested by human reason during man's sojourn on earth. The Christian, on the contrary, rests his claims upon what he terms the supernatural; upon the interference of an "over-ruling providence" in natural affairs; upon the assumption that the universe began, and that in due time it will end; upon the theory of special creation; and also upon the supposition that belief is voluntary, the ultimate result of which can be known only in some future existence.

Now, it will be seen that between the Christian and the scientist there is a marked divergence, and that the belief and method of the two cannot reasonably be accepted at the same time. It is to science that we are indebted for physical development, intellectual improvement, ethical culture, and the acquirement of social comforts; while the claims of the Christian make belief more important than demonstration, and the consideration of some imaginary future world of greater consequence than the study of our present existence.

CHARLES WATTS.

Maternal Piety.

"Children have a keenness of judgment and a delicacy of impression which would not be imagined unless one has studied them. Justice and equity are easily born in their minds, for they possess, above all things, positive logic."—GUSTAV DROZ, in *Monsieur, Madame et Bébé.*

A PRESIDING Member of the Mothers' Union contributes a lengthy article to the *Church Times* on "A Question of the Day"—the question for her being, of course, the religious instruction of children. Naturally one is inclined to read the contribution with considerable respect, which might be greater if there were not a latent suspicion that the article is not entirely, though ostensibly, a feminine production. Each year, according to the writer, brings its problems, which are mostly new phases of old thoughts, but have nevertheless to be confronted and solved. There is no doubt, the writer adds, that one of the most pressing questions which now puzzle thoughtful minds concerns the attitude that should be taken with regard to Biblical criticism—*i.e.*, How should our children be taught to study the Bible?

On this point the Mothers' Union representative is so "decided and emphatic"—to use her own words—that one rather trembles for the offspring under her care; which care may, of course, be tender and gentle to the extent of indulgence, but seems more likely, from the general tone of her article, to be of the stern and unflinching order.

With charming dogmatism she declares: "The Higher Criticism is for children unnecessary, dangerous, and injurious. A child should never be allowed to approach the Bible in a questioning spirit, or be permitted to ask, 'Is this true?'" Well, we will say nothing about the Higher Criticism as a part of the curriculum of children; but—a child not to ask questions! Why, the whole period of childhood is one long note of interrogation. How on earth are the little ones to emerge from childhood in the matter of information and reasoning faculty if they are not to be permitted to inquire and form their own little judgments, perhaps afterwards to be corrected by themselves or others, but still a strengthening and helpful and hopeful exercise at the time? Why may they not ask questions about the Bible which is forced upon them, and why may they not inquire, "Is this true?"

As we read on in this *Church Times* article we begin to build up in our mind's eye the kind of matron who has written it. Needless to say, our imaginative portrait is far, far different to that delightful sketch of maternity which Gustav Droz has drawn for us in his inimitable work quoted from above.

To continue. This very much "Presiding Member of the Mothers' Union" lays it down that, "whatever critics may say or may dispute concerning the dates, histories, miracles, scientific facts of the Old Testament, the Bible must be approached as the one Divine Book—the message of God to mankind." Well, if we were the lady's husband, perhaps by dint of long training, we might sit meekly down and accept this dictum, whether we liked it or not. But not being so, we may, perhaps, be permitted to inquire whether she has fully considered what she means by that "whatever." It comprises so much that it cannot be given away, even for the sake of argument, without the divine character of the book going with it.

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"Mistranslations do not affect its value." They do; and, when rectified, the Book is not very much the better. But "mistranslations" in themselves are a reflection upon the Almighty Author, who, with every possible resource at his hand, seems not to have been able to find a less clumsy method of conveying his all-important message to mankind.

"The Higher Criticism may be overturned and become obsolete twenty years hence." There is no probability of its being overturned, but it may become obsolete, in the sense that the bulk of rational people will by that time have discarded as of historical value the traditions and myths against which it is now directed.

> "Meanwhile, the Word of God remains like a rock in the ocean, immovable, imperishable. It has been surrounded and assailed by storms and waves of criticism for hundreds of years. It has been attacked by Agnostics and Infidels, whose object is to undermine all faith by ridicule and false assertions. But the Bible has withstood learned criticism suggesting doubts and difficulties, and open attacks from unbelievers, and it will do so again to the end of time. It is the Voice of God for the healing of the nations. The harm done to individual souls by the doubts thrown on the miracles of the Old Testament is cruel, and may be irreparable."

This British matron, if she will forgive us for saying so, has obviously much to learn. It would be useless to reply to this fanfaronade, which we are inclined to think is only an extract from her husband's latest and locally-praised sermon.

Later on, we are assured, on the same authority, that the danger of doubts aroused by the Higher Criticism concerning particular miracles of the Old Testament is that it leads to the questioning of *all* miracles. No doubt; the miracles are pretty much of the same class throughout the Bible; those recorded in the New Testament being not a whit more credible than those which are set forth in the Old Testament.

"And this attitude of mind is perhaps the most baneful, deadly, and fatal that can assail a human being, for it brings many a one to the utter wreckage of faith." What a dreadful climax and calamity! "Wreckage" sounds as if a man were utterly overwhelmed and dashed to pieces, and only bits of him left to be picked up afterwards as flotsam and jetsam. But as far as mere faith in the Scriptures is concerned, there may be a very happy *Resurgam*, and in most, possibly in all, cases there is.

The Presiding Member of the Mothers' Union is "well aware that those who are pained at the Higher Criticism of this age, and decline to teach it to their children, are stamped as behind the age, narrow-minded, and ignorant. We must accept this contempt, and have the courage of our opinions." Here we have a fine combination of the martyr-Amazon spirit, which, in some other cause, might be worthy of admiration.

The valiant lady asks, "What, for example, can be more dangerous to the faith of a child than the tone of some of the modern books which are put forth as aids for teachers and for pupils?

> "For instance, in one of the latest, *The Dawn of Revelation*, we find that 'the story of the ten plagues seems to express in an imaginative form an account of physical phenomena possible in Egypt'; that 'the crossing of the Red Sea was what we should now call *providential* rather than *miraculous*.'
>
> "Again, what can be more bewildering than to be told that 'the story of the smoking mountain seems to require a volcano, and as yet there have been no traces of volcanic action discovered there' (the Sinai of Exodus); 'consequently, that it must point to some spot in the Edomite hills not yet explored.' Or that 'the beautiful story of the manna is most likely an allegorical way of expressing how God gave them day by day their daily bread.' 'Manna is found in various parts of the Sinaitic desert; but it does not fall from heaven, but exudes from the resinous shrubs which grow in some of the mountains.'"

In the same book, intended as an aid to teachers and pupils, Balaam's Ass is, alas, disposed of. It is said: "'The story of the speaking ass' is plainly in the language of poetry; if put into prose, the ass would have been said to look round at her master with the 'speaking eyes' of remonstrance which we know so well in a dumb animal."

This evasion is, of course, absurd. We agree with the Mothers' Union representative when she says: "St. Peter certainly believed in the miracle as recorded in the Old Testament, for he says: 'Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, was rebuked for his iniquity. The dumb ass, *speaking with man's voice*, forbad the madness of the prophet' (2 Peter ii. 16). Again, we are told that 'the story of the taking of Jericho must be looked upon as one of the national legends of the Israelites, and we cannot tell exactly what the facts of the siege of Jericho were in prose form.' 'Scientific men have discovered that certain sounds.....have the power of setting up vibrations so strong as to break down buildings.'"

The history of Elijah is disposed of in the same text-book by the observation that "the wonderful story of his departure is thought by some to be an allegorical way of representing that he died a martyr's death by fire."

This book, says the Presiding Member of the Mothers' Union, "is now widely used in some of our public schools. It is taught to many of our boys and girls, both at home and at school. It is in the hands of teachers. It has been much praised by notable persons. We find in it that the narrative of the Exodus cannot be considered as historical, and that when the Prophets foretold the future they were sometimes mistaken; but it is startling beyond words to come upon an intimation in a note in one part of the Prophecies of Isaiah to the following effect:—

> "'It seems not impossible that these short Anti-Babylonian prophecies may have been represented as prophecies of Isaiah to deceive the Chaldæans during the Exile, while the exiles themselves were quite aware of their source.'"

It may be "a grave responsibility to have thus sown broadcast the Elimination of the Supernatural in the minds of the young and uninstructed, and to cultivate in them a doubting and critical spirit as regards the Bible." But the responsibility is not so grave, because the duty is incumbent to cultivate in the young a critical spirit, not merely as to the Bible, but all kinds of literature, ancient and modern, "sacred" or profane.

What is the use of trying, as this lady contributor to the *Church Times* would try, to prevent children asking, in relation to Bible narratives: "Is this true?" They will be sure to repeat the inquiry at a later stage in life, when they cannot be repressed, and when they will have a right to insist upon, and will find, an answer for themselves. Old Mrs. Partington tried to sweep back the waves of the Atlantic with a mop, but the effort was not attended even by partial success.

FRANCIS NEALE.

That Trip to England.

I COULD not visit England this year for several reasons:—

1st. Want of money.

2nd. Want of a substitute to do my work while away.

3rd. I was very ill in the early part of the year owing to the attempt of one of Carr's lambs to murder me. What may happen next year I cannot yet say.

I should not have mentioned the subject just now but for what appears in the *Freethinker*, June 10. Our friends in England held their annual Conference in London, June 3, and I find the following item in the report of the proceedings:—

"MR. JOSEPH SYMES.

"The President (Mr. Foote) moved, and Mr. Bater seconded, the following resolution, which was carried: 'That this Conference regrets to learn that Mr. Joseph Symes has been obliged to postpone his visit to England indefinitely, and that the Executive be authorised to raise a Special Fund to facilitate his visit in case of his being able to surmount the non-financial difficulties in the way of his temporarily leaving Australia.'

"In the course of the discussion many kind things were said about Mr. Symes."

At present I can but say that I am extremely gratified and grateful for the altogether unexpected goodness of Mr. Foote and my other British friends. I have had to work so many years alone, and with very little recognition or outward encouragement, that this comes as a refreshing shower after a long drought.

I cannot yet say whether I shall be able to leave my work here, but I will certainly do my best to visit the old land next year. My one great difficulty will be to get a man to carry on the work during my absence. If that man does not turn up, I am at a loss to know how I can get away.

However, I beg to offer my sincerest thanks to my British friends for their extremely kindly action.

—*Liberator* (Melbourne). JOS. SYMES.

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Acid Drops.

ACCORDING to the *Daily News*, a clergyman's son fighting at the front in South Africa sent home for certain little comforts, and requested that the packet might be labelled "Religious Tracts," as it would be sure to get through quickly then, but otherwise nobody could tell when it would arrive, or whether it would arrive at all. What a commentary on the official methods of looking after poor Tommy Atkins!

Leniency *versus* severity is the subject of two notes in the *British Weekly*. In one note we are told that Lord Roberts has, by his leniency, followed the wisest course. In the next note we learn that the morning service in many London churches has been wisely shortened during the hot weather to an hour and a quarter. So that both the Church and the Army are disposed to manifest a little mercy just now. We are afraid, however, that the humor of placing the two notes together was unconscious on the part of the *B. W.*

"The oldest actual record of hanging," says *Pearson's Weekly*, "is the execution of his chief butler by Pharaoh, narrated in Genesis." We are sorry to correct our contemporary, but it was not the chief butler that Pharaoh hanged. It was the chief baker. Of course it doesn't much matter at this time of day which of them had his neck stretched, but it is just as well to be accurate. Above all, it is very bad form to let a Freethinker set a Christian right about the text of the Bible.

W. S. Lewis, of Canonbury, London, and J. Lewis, of Wakefield, both, it is stated, the sons of a Christian minister at Wednesbury, have been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for receiving a large quantity of stolen pills. Religious as they were, they were not foolish enough to swallow the pills themselves; their object was to sell them to their fellow Christians.

Catholic toleration is a noble thing, in appearance, when it is preached by Catholics who are in a minority and want the majority to give them equal rights. But how it changes when the Catholics are in a decisive majority themselves! Then they show that the historic, essential principle of their Church is the merciless suppression of "heresy." Recently at Rome, for instance, the Pope has shown what he would do in this line if he had the power. In a letter to the Cardinal Vicar he denounces the free propagation of Protestantism in Italy. Unfortunately, he says, it is permitted by law, and therefore it must be opposed by a counter propaganda. Yes, that is so; but it is pretty clear how soon it would be otherwise if the Pope could only have his way.

The following story is told of the recently-retired Irish Law Lord, Lord Morris of Spiddal, when acting as Judge of Assize in Ireland. A dispensary doctor proved that he had often given eight grains to a man, from which it was to be inferred that twelve for a horse was not excessive. "Tell me this," said the Judge. "The twelve grains—wouldn't they kill the Devil himself if he swallowed them?" The doctor was annoyed, and pompously replied: "I don't know, my lord; I never had him for a patient." The Bench: "Ah, no, docther, ye niver had; more's the pity. The old bhoy's still alive."—*Reynolds' Newspaper.*

The Wesleyan Conference is issuing a Pastoral letter, which will be read in the principal chapels in September. Meanwhile, the public are favored with a little "advance" information as to its character. This letter, we are told, after a suitable introduction, proceeds to point out "that in Secularism, not its theory, but its temper and habit, lies one of the chief dangers to religion. With multitudes of the peoples of Christian Europe, God and the eternal are mere nonentities. Art and science, literature and the press, are largely un-Christian in their animus." "The Secular atmosphere," it says, "is laden with the infection of materialism." Which means, we presume, that the people are more and more bent on making the best for themselves of this world, instead of feeding, clothing, and housing a lot of lazy priests for promising them splendid things in the world to come.

Are there dogs in heaven? This question has been ventilated in the *Westminster Gazette*. One correspondent, apparently a parson, thinks that there must be a future life for dogs, and a place where they will be compensated for their gratuitous sufferings here. Did I not think so, the gentleman exclaims, I could "never believe in a God of infinite love and justice as I do." In other words, there must be a heaven for dogs in order to allow this gentleman to retain his religious opinions comfortably. Finally, he says: "I can see immortality in my dog's loving eyes." Perhaps this is creditable to his feelings, but it is a very poor compliment to his intelligence.

Another correspondent points out that, according to Revelation xxii. 15, dogs are outside heaven; whereupon another correspondent says that this "proves conclusively that dogs *exist* hereafter." But does the word "dog" in this text really mean the four-footed animal we are all familiar with? We think not. In the Old Testament the price of a dog was not to be paid into the sanctuary. But scholars know very well what *that* means, and we venture to think that a similar meaning should be attached to the word "dog" in Revelation. Of course the subject is too scabrous to be dealt with in a journal like ours, which is read by old and young and by both sexes.

"Buy of Wiggins." This is the end of a very pious advertisement in the *Grays and Tilbury Gazette*. We regard the advertisement as extremely characteristic. The real upshot of most exhortations and services is "Buy of Wiggins." Take away the element of profit, and Christianity, like other religions, would soon collapse.

Every champion of anti-infidelity manages sooner or later to obtain his own special converted Atheist. There is no exception to the rule in the case of the Rev. A. J. Waldron. This gentleman relates in the *Sunday Reader* how "Tom Howard" drifted into infidelity, went to the Hall of Science, listened to the seductive eloquence of Mrs. Besant, and then fell into drunkenness and lust. But at length he found that "Atheism, drink, lust, failed to satisfy," and he was finally brought back to his mother's faith by Mr. W. T. Lee at Plymouth. We suppose this story may be regarded as a compliment to Mr. Lee; although, if there be any truth in rumor, Mr. Lee is not very likely to indulge in public praise of Mr. Waldron. Perhaps the story is intended as a peace offering. But that is a matter between the gentlemen themselves. What we should like to know is the present whereabouts of "Tom Howard." "To-day," Mr. Waldron says, "he is engaged in Christian work." Will he kindly give us this convert's real name and address?

Meanwhile we beg to record our high appreciation of Mr. Waldron's "Christian charity." His veracity, of course, has long been famous. Atheism, drunkenness, and lust, as all the world knows, naturally go together; and Mrs. Besant's Atheistic eloquence was just the thing to drive a young man down to the lowest stages of degradation. All the world knows that too. Indeed, it is almost a pity that Mr. Waldron does not go in for greater novelties. He might try his hand at an Atheist pickpocket or an Atheist burglar. But it may be that he is not so familiar with the vices of such artists, and is apprehensive that his picture might lack actuality.

"Christianity," says an official correspondent of the *Daily News*, "wears the aspect of a political conspiracy, hatched by foreign Powers and supported by foreign arms, against Chinese society and the Chinese government. It was forced upon the country by treaties which China was powerless to resist."

"The Chinaman," this correspondent continues, "sees in the missionary simply the advance agent of Imperialism, and in his propaganda only a cloak for a stealthy attack on the Chinese Commonwealth. And missionaries do not do everything they might to discourage the political aspect of their labors. They hold themselves above Chinese laws; some of them take on the swelling part of provincial Viceroys. Their converts are often drawn from the worst possible sources. The dishonest debtor, the defalcating trustee, the social outcast, men who have nothing to gain by remaining Chinamen, are the first to become convinced of the beauties of Christianity. The missionary supports them with food and money, fights their legal battles for them, and as often as not secures for them a quasi-Consular protection. The missionaries and their converts constitute, in fact, an imperium in imperio, hostile to the governing classes and oppressive towards the poor."

Mr. Joseph Hatton states that he has received a number of letters remonstrating with him for his remarks in his weekly "Cigarette Papers" deprecating foreign missions. Bristol seems to be most concerned at his suggestion that Christian missionaries should keep out of India and China. On the other hand, he says he has received an equal number of commendatory letters.

He declines to withdraw "the ordinarily liberal sentiments" to which he has given expression, however much the ostentatious "religionist" may anathematise him. He says he knows many pious men and women who think that the money spent in China and Japan would be better laid out in home missions. And he gives his critics to understand that even a "cigarette maker" may have the courage of his opinions.

The Rev. H. R. Haweis says: "I am dead against missions to the Jews (which, of course, must always be absurd as long as we are indebted to them for the whole of the literature on which our religion is based), and against missions to the Hindoos, Mohammedans, and Chinese kept up by societies in the mother country."

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A Sunday-school tea meeting took place recently at Nechells, Birmingham, to which the mothers of the children were invited. While the women were enjoying themselves, their babies were handed over to the care of the elder children, with the consequence that an extraordinary mixing up of babies ensued.

About ten o'clock the women departed with their families, and duly arrived at home. While undressing her infant one woman discovered she had become possessed of the wrong child, and forthwith commotion ensued. The little girl who had charge of it did not know the child to whom she had handed the right baby; and, although a return was made to the schoolroom, no trace of the other baby could be discovered. All night long the mournful mother continued her investigations without success. In fact, it was not until the next morning that the right baby was returned, the woman who had it, incredible as it may seem, having undressed it and slept with it the whole of the night without finding out the mistake.

If the occasion had not been a Sunday-school tea meeting, we should have suspected that something stronger than tea was imbibed. Perhaps the mothers were drunk "in the spirit" of the Lord, as John of Patmos appears to have been.

A Leeds vicar is much concerned about the indiscriminate baptism of infants. He seems to think that the holy rite is wasted on many wretched little mortals in our large towns who are evidently doomed to be brought up in heathenism. "The custom is," he says, "for parents and friends, who never enter any place of worship, whose children go to no Sunday-school, and who blaspheme God, to bring their infants to the font and go through a service of which they hardly understand a word, and listen to instructions to which they pay no heed. Are we right, in these days of heathenism at home, and of the alienation of the mass of the people from the Church, in continuing to adopt methods which imply that the whole nation is loyal to the Church of England?"

What does he mean? Has he the sinister design of endangering the "eternal salvation" of these poor mites because their parents blaspheme and do not attend church? The idea is too dreadful to contemplate.

Not piety, but pork. The following bit of racy humor appears in *The Farringdons*, the latest novel by Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler: "They've no sense, men haven't," said Mrs. Hankey—"that's what's the matter with them." "You never spoke a truer word, Mrs. Hankey," replied Mrs. Bateson. "The very best of them don't properly know the difference between their souls and their stomachs, and they fancy they are a-wrestling with their doubts when really it is their dinners that are a-wrestling with them."

"Now, take Bateson hisself," continued Mrs. Bateson. "A kinder husband or better Methodist never drew breath; yet, so sure as he touches a bit of pork, he begins to worry hisself about the doctrine of election till there's no living with him. And then he'll sit in the front parlor, and engage in prayer for hours at a time, till I says to him: 'Bateson,' says I, 'I'd be ashamed to go troubling the Lord with a prayer, when a pinch o' carbonate o' soda would set things straight again.'"

The late D. L. Moody occasionally spoke with sturdy common sense. This was especially noticeable when he dealt with modern notions of prayer. On one occasion he delivered himself as follows: "There is a new kind of philosophy nowadays which teaches that it is a very healthy exercise to pray, because it teaches us submission. God doesn't change in His plans for us; we don't get anything more by asking, but then just ask—it is healthy exercise! Suppose that in the dead of winter, when the thermometer is down at zero, a man who has been stuck for twenty-four hours in a drift manages to get to my house at midnight, and rings the bell. I go to the window, and say: 'Who is there?' 'Mr. ——, I have been in a snow-bank twenty-four hours, and I am dying. Won't you help me?' 'Well,' I say, 'I have a fixed rule never to open my door until morning, but you just keep on knocking; it will do you good; it is a healthy exercise.'" That is a fair illustration of the way some people would have us look at prayer. Christ said, "Ask and ye *shall* receive."

Being exhorted and instigated thereto by their pastor, the Rev. Gay Bryant, the Methodists of Shoal Creek, Cherokee county, N.C., assembled about the church of the Sanctificationists at that place on July 28, set fire to the edifice, and burned it to the ground. While the building was burning the Rev. Bryant preached a sermon to the infuriated crowd, exhorting them to continue the destruction of the property of the Sanctificationists, and endorsing their action in setting fire to the church. It is not reported that the authorities took cognisance of this outrage by Methodist Boxers.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Poor Dr. Parker! He is now away on a holiday, and it is charitable to hope that he may not hear of the liberties taken with his name during his absence. But imagine his feelings if he learnt that the Institute of Journalists, who have invited him to preach to them in connection with their forthcoming annual Conference in London, have announced him on their program as "Dr. John Parker."

This should inspire him to an eloquent discourse to the budding "journalists" on the virtue of accuracy, though, by the way, he is no great shining light in that respect himself. He might take occasion to inform them that he has been known, in London at least, for many years as "Dr. *Joseph* Parker." Possibly they may not have been aware of it, for such is fame, but his Christian name has always been "Joseph." Furthermore, that, in common politeness, the least thing that can be done when you invite a celebrated Divine (oh, yes, Dr. Parker would so describe himself) to preach to you is to make yourself acquainted with his patronymic.

"Damn the Sultan!" said Dr. Parker on one memorable occasion in an access of indignation. May he not feel inclined to exclaim a little later on, when he hears of this almost insulting and quite inexcusable blunder, "Damn the journalists!"?

The Rev. Henry M. Wharton, D.D., who has been associated with the late Dwight L. Moody, the Rev. Dr. Munhall, and the Rev. Charles Yatman in evangelistic work, was arrested at Asbury Park last Saturday on a charge of obtaining 8,000 dollars by fraud. A woman gave him 6,000 dollars-worth of property with which to establish a home for the orphans of the Spanish war, and he at once mortgaged the same, raising 5,000 dollars on one mortgage and 8,000 dollars on the other. He did not tell the holder of the second mortgage that the property had already been plastered. Wharton is a Baptist. He says that the matter will be satisfactorily explained. His inability to realise the extent of his turpitude reveals a well-developed case of clergyman's mind.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Bramwell Booth, of Salvation Army fame, is given to heroic measures. He has noticed in the East-end the amount of courting that goes on between young lovers at street corners and in blind alleys. According to a writer in the *Examiner*, he has in this connection expressed his belief that it would be a good thing to have attached to every Salvation Army barracks "social parlors," where young people and old could come in freely for social intercourse with each other, and carry on their courting indoors.

Well, there are possible dangers about the project. Though all might be well if the "social parlors" were spacious apartments utilised by many couples simultaneously, with strict supervision over all. And then, of course, the thing would become a "dead letter."

We haven't yet heard the last of the gifted Sheldon in this country. A parting interview with him is published, in which he is good enough to say that, "in his judgment, it would be difficult to run a morning paper on perfectly Christian lines, because of the Monday morning issue, which involves Sunday labor." This is a knock at all the morning dailies. Still more at the Sabbatarians who rush with avidity to their Monday morning newspaper, after declaiming, it may be the previous evening, against the evil of Sunday labor.

A startling discovery has been made by the Rev. Price Hughes. He says that "the ceaseless attacks of the infatuated secular press upon the rest, quiet, and sacred leisure of Sunday have already produced their national results even upon the history of our lunatic asylums." Some medical superintendent of a lunatic asylum has told him that a large majority of the cases of insanity that have come under his care are due to the fact that the miserable men in question have worked seven days a week.

That may be so; but the "infatuated secular press" have never advocated seven days' work a week. Quite the contrary; they have insisted upon at least one day's rest in seven, and secular common sense has practically established, in addition, a half-day's rest on Saturday for most employees, and on Thursday, or some other day in the week, for shop assistants. There never was any danger of working-people losing one day's cessation from work in a week. The great trouble with Price Hughes, and others of the sky-piloting class, is that that one day is not invariably on Sunday. That is the day they have monopolised for themselves in the name of the Lord. They want everybody to be free on that day, so that they may be laid hold of and dragged to the various conventicles—Church and Nonconformist. But that is not at all the rational idea of rest and recreation.

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If anything is likely to lead to insanity in connection with the Sabbath, it is the dismal, depressing dulness of the day as it is now observed. As for the patients referred to by the medical superintendent, they will probably be found to be persons who have voluntarily over-worked themselves in spite of the plainest demands of rational hygiene and the expostulations of their friends.

The *Congregationalist* notes that, of the outgoing class at Yale, the total number of graduates who will enter the ministry is very small in proportion to the size of the class, and the same statement holds good respecting the classes at Amherst, Williams, and the other institutions that have been feeders of the ministry. The *Watchman* is authority for the statement that there are now less than two dozen students to attend the instruction of nine professors at Andover Theological Seminary. The decline began soon after the retirement of Professors Park and Phelps, and the introduction of a more liberal theology.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

A tremendous thunderstorm which recently burst over West Norwood supplied a preacher at the Chatsworth-road Baptist Chapel with what the *British Weekly* describes as "an illustration for a very beautiful sermon." Probably the preacher improved the occasion. His text was, "Is not God in the height of heavens?" So high apparently that he does not notice how often, when he arranges a big thunderstorm, his own "sacred edifices" suffer from his own lightning darts.

At Great Marlow a lofty church spire has just been restored after damage by lightning. Curiously enough, a local young lady imitated a steeplejack by climbing to the top of the spire. One of these days we shall hear of local young ladies climbing into the pulpits. Certainly they would be far more attractive there than the male "old women" who at present occupy many of the ecclesiastical rostrums.

An obituary appears in the *Methodist Times* of a lady worker in connection with the Methodist Church at Kettering. We are told that the following verse, which she quoted more than once, exactly expressed the state of her mind :—

> What have I then wherein to trust?
> I nothing have, I nothing am;
> Excluded is my every boast,
> My glory swallowed up in shame.

The natural rhyme in the concluding line is, of course, "sham." That seems to be a much more appropriate word in connection with this pious mock humility.

How good of the Rev. Dr. Amory Bradford to say: "I have seldom fallen in with a man who was a dishonest doubter." Even a burglar may have something good at the bottom of him. How nice to know that we can be incredulous, and still be credited with integrity. The *Christian World* suggests that Dr. Amory Bradford's declaration may be "very shocking to many who read it, but very helpful to some others." There is not much to be said for the observation and mental capacity of either the "many" or the "others."

That light and airy *littérateur*, Augustine Birrell, in his recently-published *Essays*, writes in the following shocking terms of the saintly Hannah More and the class she represented: "Hannah More was the first, and I trust the worst, of a large class—'the ugliest of her daughters Hannah,' if I may parody a poet she affected to admire. This class may be imperfectly described as 'the well-to-do Christian.' It inhabited snug places in the country, and kept an excellent, if not dainty, table. The money it saved in a ball-room it spent upon a greenhouse. Its horses were fat, and its coachmen invariably present at family prayers. Its pet virtue was church twice on Sunday, and its peculiar horrors theatrical entertainments, dancing, and threepenny points. Outside its garden wall lived the poor, who, if virtuous, were for ever curtseying to the ground or wearing neat uniforms, except when expiring upon truckle-beds beseeching God to bless the young ladies of the Grange or the Manor House, as the case might be."

Apropos of the not generally known fact that Colonel Legge, the Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, conducted a prayer-meeting in a room in the House of Commons, a religious weekly alludes to the official prayers in the House itself. It explains that these are said by the Chaplain (Canon Wilberforce) kneeling beside the Speaker. Then it says: "They are conducted devoutly and solemnly, no strangers or reporters being permitted by their presence to divert the attention of the worshippers."

This is rather a funny allusion to the reporters. How would their presence in the gallery distract the members from their "devout and solemn" performance? Or is it an innuendo that they are a species of "unclean beast" who would defile the atmosphere in these sanctified moments? Or is it feared that they would laugh and whisper and make fun of the solemn farce? It may be safely said that the members are fully entitled to their privacy during this preliminary as far as reporters are concerned. We should be very much surprised to hear that any pressman had expressed the faintest desire to be present at the function.

The religious scribe adds apparently with regret, and as a matter of reproach, what is well known—namely, that "many members attend not to pray, but merely to secure a seat for the remainder of the sitting."

The following is a fact. A party were driving in a brake to Hereford on a recent Sunday. One of them, a little girl, had been told by her mother to pray for a fine day. Coming home, the lassie said: "Ma, God has answered my prayers. He hasn't let it rain." "That's right," said her mother. "Oh but, Ma," said the child, who had evidently been taking the matter very seriously, "I had to give him a good talking to." Some Freethinkers who were present more than smiled.

Evangelist Bailey, a black servant of Christ, who preaches in the Parks, is evidently ill-acquainted with the English language in general, and with English orthography in particular. He signs himself "E. Bailey Evangilist." (Set it up precisely like that, please, Mr. Compositor.) The handbill he distributes, announcing the sale of West Indies Cocoa Rock, West Indies Sauce, and West Indies Foreign Lavender, begs people to spend a penny on his goods in order to "rescue many from poverty." We presume the seller himself is included in the "many." "I call upon you," he says, "through Christ toward the poverty of Children and Adults." This is a curious piece of composition. It is to be hoped that his Rock and Sauce are of a better quality. Before signing his name, he says, "I kindly await your answer." Nice composition again! What he means is, "I await your kind answer." The kindness is not in the waiting seller, but in the expected purchaser. The black evangelist's friends should club together and send him to an evening school.

A young hopeful of ten thus replies in his school examination paper to the question, "Who were the Puritans, and why did they go to America?": "The puritans were a relijus sekt who left England because they ware pursicyutid, they first went to Holland but left there and went to Americer because they did not want there children brought up boers and dutchmen. They were calld puritans because they kept themselves clean in church and the king did not like this so they all went away."

The alienation of the masses from church is the subject of some editorial comments in the *Church Gazette*, which says that the working classes "attend church services less and less, and seem tending to forsake them entirely.....A still more lamentable feature, perhaps, in the case is provided by the fact that church congregations—such as they are—are nearly exclusively made up of women; and that, for some reason or other—we have very little doubt in our minds what that reason is—men are more and more utterly declining to go to church on any terms whatever."

Still more about the great fish story. A correspondent writes to the *Church Times* in support of the *Sheol* theory in regard to Jonah's strange adventure. He thinks that when Jonah was swallowed his soul entered *Sheol*, whilst his body remained dead in the fish's belly. When land was reached body and soul were re-united, and Jonah stepped out of the fish and on to the shore once more a live man.

There is just the little difficulty that the narrative says: "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out the fish's belly"—rather a remarkable feat for a dead man. The Sheol theorist, however, is equal to the occasion. He says: "Jonah's prayer out of the whale's belly was probably a short precatory ejaculation, as he was gradually absorbed in the fish's bowels."

Isn't this too absurd for anything? Fancy describing thus a prayer extending over eight fairly-sized verses!

Mrs. Pew: "Oh, Dr. Prooftext, I was so edified by what you said this morning. I am sure your words sank so deep in my heart that I never shall forget them." Dr. Prooftext: "Indeed! What part of my discourse particularly impressed you?" Mrs. Pew: "That part of it where you spoke of the —about the where you referred to the—. Well, of course, I cannot repeat your words exactly, but the impression is ineffaceable."—*Boston Transcript.*

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Special.

The FREETHINKER has been for several months, and is still, published at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed. Readers are warned against sending orders to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. Those premises have for some time been definitively closed, and Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, who cannot be answerable for anything sent to him.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 2, Freethought Demonstration, West Ham (3.30).
September 9, 16, 23, London; 30, Glasgow.
October 7, Manchester; 21, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—September 2, New Brompton; 9, 16, and 23, Secular Hall, 61 New Church-road, Camberwell; 30, The Athenæum, 73 Tottenham Court-road. October 7, Glasgow; 9 and 10, debate at Bolton. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

THE Freethought Publishing Company, through Mr. Foote or Miss Vance, continues to receive a number of complaints from persons who have apparently not seen, or have disregarded, our continuous announcement, and have sent orders for this journal, or for books and pamphlets, to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C., without being able to obtain any answer from him. We have already stated, and we repeat it, that the old shop in Stonecutter-street has for some time been definitively closed, that no sort of business is carried on there, and that Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, either as agent or otherwise. The Company cannot be answerable for anything posted to Mr. Forder, and it is practically useless to send the Company complaints concerning him.

UNIT.—Carlyle's *French Revolution* is the best graphic account in English. Mignet's (in Bohn's Library) is philosophical and excellent. The larger works on the subject by Lamartine, Thiers, and Louis Blanc—all written from different standpoints—might be read with advantage afterwards. Lamartine and Thiers have been translated into English. Louis Blanc's, we believe, can only be obtained in the original French.

J. W. WITTERING.—Ingersoll's *Defence of Freethought* is reprinting, and will be on sale again shortly. We overlooked dropping it out of the list for a while. You suggest that Mr. Foote should "make time" to write his contemplated volume on Shakespeare. Unfortunately, he cannot "make" time, but he will do his best to get the volume "through," as the Americans say.

H. DAWSON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

A. WEDDLE.—Miss Vance replied to your letter, as far as she could, in our absence. We now beg to inform you directly that the Christian who told you that the late J. M. Wheeler committed suicide has either an accommodating imagination or an easy way of repeating any "convenient" lies he happens to hear. Mr. Wheeler did *not* commit suicide. He died of acute mania complicated by pneumonia, as the medical certificate declared. The facts were published at the time (May, 1898) in the *Freethinker*.

ANGLO-INDIAN.—See paragraph.

W. P. BALL.—Always glad to receive your valuable batches of cuttings.

W. H. SPIVEY.—We had the greatest respect for the late Mr. Samuel Mitchell, and always looked forward to the pleasure of meeting him when we were going to visit Huddersfield. He carried in his very face the thoughtfulness and high character of his lifetime.

E. WRIGHT.—Paley's *Evidences* still survives as a text-book, because it was the work of a very skilful, if unscrupulous, special pleader. But not much value is attached to it now by the best teachers and critics, even in the Church of England. The official recognition of universities, in the matter of theology, amounts to nothing. Those institutions are always a long way behind, not only the best, but even the average, thought of the day.

A. H. TABRUM.—We have allowed the correspondence to proceed so far without interruption, but we must now tell you that we cannot let our limited space be wasted. Your fresh letter is no real answer to Mr. Cohen. It is simply nonsense to repeat that Dr. Horton's sermon may have been published without his knowledge or sanction in such a journal; and if you read Mr. Foote's *Darwin on God* you will see how little you know of the *facts* about Darwin. When you say he was a "nominal Churchman," you are either telling a falsehood yourself or carelessly echoing a falsehood by someone else. He was certainly buried in Westminster Abbey, but you forget that he was dead then. That farce was arranged by others.

M. E. PEGG.—Date booked. Details as to the proposed Demonstration in Manchester awaited. With regard to your kind inquiry, Mr. Foote's general health is excellent; but, unfortunately, he caught a very nasty chill at or after last Sunday's Demonstration in Brockwell Park, and the result was a swollen face and an agonising neuralgia—a thing he is quite unaccustomed to. As that was all the profit he derived from the Demonstration, it was amusing to hear from Miss Vance—or rather it would have been amusing without the neuralgia—that one of the Christian Evidence men, when she was helping to take up the collection, said "Oh, it's to keep *him*," nodding his head (or what passed for one) in the direction of Mr. Foote, who was then speaking.

F. GOODWIN.—See acknowledgment elsewhere. Glad to hear you much enjoyed the Freethought Demonstration in Victoria Park. We note your endorsement of T. Clark's suggestion that the *Freethinker* should be folded. This seems to be the general desire, and we suppose the extra cost must be incurred.

H. B. P.—Accept our hearty thanks.

H. PERCY WARD.—Mr. Foote will come to Birmingham himself for the Freethought Demonstration in the Town Hall on Sunday, October 21. He is writing you by post as to the details.

ESS JAY BEE.—(1) A different person altogether. (2) The poem you refer to, "An Atheist's Grave," was reproduced as from the New York *Truthseeker* during our absence from the editorial chair. We printed it some fifteen years ago as a *Freethinker* tract. It was first published about fifty years ago in one of the old Freethought papers. It was written by that fruitful author, Mr. Anonymous.

JAMES NEATE sends us the following towards the Children's Excursion, and we have handed the same over to Miss Vance:—Albert Simson, 5s.; James Neate, 2s. 6d.; Caroline Neate, 2s. 6d.; W. S. Clogg, 6d.; Button, 1s.; Brooks, 6d. Total, 12s.

PUZZLED.—You are quite right. When Jesus said "This is my body and blood," his body had not been sacrificed nor his blood shed. The Catholics make it a miracle, and believe in its perpetuity in the Mass. Protestants, as usual, are less logical, and accept a makeshift doctrine.

V. C. MARTIN.—Have written you on the other matter. We do not know of any definite "refutation" of the theory that the English people are the lost Ten Tribes. No serious ethnologist would consider it worthy of a refutation.

T. E. WILLIS.—Mistake rectified Receipt follows.

N. S. S. CHILDREN'S PARTY.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Major John C. Harris, R.E., £1; C. J. Pottage, £1; J. R. Webberly, 2s. 6d.; F. Wood, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Horne, 2s. 6d.; Emma Bradlaugh, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Barry, 2s.; G. C. W., 2s.

T. BRADSHAW.—Many thanks. We do not require other dates. Donation acknowledged elsewhere.

T. AYLING.—It was a printer's blunder. The numbers should have been January 1 and 8.

E. SIMS.—Glad to hear the West Ham "saints" had such a good taste of heaven on earth last Sunday. It is such a lot better than waiting for the sweet by-and-bye. We should have liked to be with you; but we can't be everywhere, like a certain fabulous personage. Thanks for your kind inquiries. All are well in the editor's household, except (quite temporarily) himself.

L. ORGAN.—Thanks.

W. CHIVERS.—Much obliged. Yes, it was a misprint.

E. WEBB.—Received with thanks.

S. HARTMANN, the N. S. S. honorary treasurer, writing to us from the country, asks us to put him down for £1 towards the Children's Excursion and £8 towards the Twentieth Century Fund. He also wishes himself put down for eight copies of the *Freethinker* weekly, which he will have forwarded to various addresses. Mr. Hartmann says the President has hit upon another good idea in this Twentieth Century Fund. He hopes it will be as successful as the Freethought Publishing Company and the Secular Society, Limited; and he is good enough to say that the party owes the President a great debt of gratitude for his indefatigable labors. He hopes the President will prepare himself to fight for a seat in the House of Commons. Well, it would be a good thing to have a pronounced and militant Freethinker there; but would so many duties be possible to a single man?

RECEIVED.—Literary Guide—Truthseeker (New York)—Islington Gazette—Huddersfield Examiner—East Essex Times—Crescent—Two Worlds—Freidenker—St. Mary's Parish Magazine—Ethical World—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Yorkshire Evening Post—Edinburgh Evening Dispatch—Rushden Echo—Leeds Mercury.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

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Sugar Plums.

ANOTHER very successful Freethought Demonstration was held on Sunday evening in Brockwell Park. Mr. Wilson kindly provided a brake and pair of fine horses, as on previous occasions; the brake serving as a platform for the speakers. Mr. Victor Roger, the zealous and genial President of the Camberwell Branch, ably officiated as chairman, and Mr. A. B. Moss led off the speaking. He had to be brief, as the meeting, which began a few minutes after six, had to terminate at a quarter past seven. While he was speaking the audience gradually increased from the few who were present at the start, and the next speaker, Mr. Cohen, had a capital meeting to address. Mr. Watts, who followed, had naturally a still larger audience, for twos and threes kept swelling the outer circle of the crowd. Finally, when the band over the hill stopped playing, a lot more people streamed across to the Freethought gathering, and Mr. Foote spoke last to a really magnificent assembly. There were some ill-wishers in the crowd, and some Christian speakers who trade in the vilest personalities, but they were overawed by the vast number of people around them, who wanted to hear the speeches, which they evidently appreciated, and meant to have order maintained. Besides, a uniformed park constable was present, and previous experience had satisfied the rowdies that the officials did not mean to tolerate disorder in Brockwell Park.

The last of the Freethought Demonstrations for the present season will take place this afternoon (Sept. 2) at West Ham. The brake-platform will be pitched at Stratford-grove at 3.30 punctually. It is to be hoped that *this* time the rain will not be as punctual as the speakers. On the previous occasion, some weeks ago, the advertised Demonstration at that spot had to be abandoned. The rains descended, and the floods came, and beat upon the devoted band, in a fashion that might have astonished Captain Noah himself. All the other Demonstrations have gone off splendidly, and we want the West Ham one to crown the series. We therefore rely on our West Ham friends to settle it somehow with the clerk of the weather.

Mr. Foote intended to reopen the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, on the first Sunday evening in September, but circumstances have rendered this impossible. London Freethinkers, however, who wish to hear Mr. Foote lecturing again indoors may expect to hear him on Sunday evening, September 9. He will occupy three Sunday evenings in succession, with three new lectures. At the end of September he goes to Scotland, returning home by way of Manchester.

Mr. Charles Watts commences his winter lecturing engagements to-day, September 2, at New Brompton, when he will lecture in the evening, taking for his subject, "Secularism: Its Necessity and Superiority."

This week's *Freethinker*, though dated Sunday, September 2, will be in the hands of most of its London readers, as usual, a couple of days earlier. We therefore repeat a part of our last week's announcement as to the Annual Children's Excursion under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive. Brakes conveying the youngsters to High Barnet will start as follows:—From South Place Chapel, 10 o'clock in the morning; from the Marble Arch, Edgware-road corner, at 10; from the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham-court-road, at 10; from the Holloway Castle Hotel, Camden-road, at 10.30. The Athenæum Hall brake will stop at the Great Northern Station, King's Cross, the York-road corner, for the convenience of children living in that quarter, provided Miss Vance receives timely notice of the number and names of the children to be expected. The whole party will meet at a given point, and, having "refreshed," will proceed to their destination by the longest and prettiest route—namely, Winchmore-hill, New Southgate, etc. The return journey, by another route, will be considerably shortened. Those in charge of the brakes will give parents information as to the time when they should meet their children to take them home. Parents will not be able to ride on the brakes, but they can go by train to High Barnet, and Underhill Farm is about ten minutes' walk from the station.

Complaint has been made, surely by someone who does not understand the matter, that South London has been neglected. But it is clearly impossible to collect children from all parts of London, when the destination is so far north. As a matter of fact, the South-place brake was originally put on at the suggestion of the South London friends. They regarded that point as the nearest and most convenient. London is so huge a place that some such arrangement is quite inevitable.

Mr. T. Wilmot, secretary of the Camberwell Branch, asks us to state that he will personally see to the transit to the South-place brake of all children who assemble at the Camberwell Secular Hall not later than 9 o'clock. Parents who send their children that way should be at the Hall again, about 9 in the evening, to receive them and take them home. They ought to be much obliged to Mr. Wilmot for his services in the matter.

The West Ham Branch had its annual excursion on Sunday. The party left Stratford Grove at 9.30 in three brakes for Stamford Rivers, took tea at the "Woodman" Inn, nearly sixty being present, and then walked in the meadows and woods, returning home in good time, after a most enjoyable day's outing.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch has arranged for a number of Sunday evening debates between Christian Evidence men and some of its own members, to take place at the Moor Edge, near the Recreation Ground. Mr. Mitchell champions the Secular side this evening (Sept. 2), and the subject for discussion is "The Deluge." His opponent must be pretty far gone to venture to discuss that topic, and the audience should derive a good deal of amusement from the encounter.

The Liverpool Branch has done good this summer by holding some open-air meetings, which used to be accounted a too risky experiment in that bigoted city. These meetings, however, have been fairly well attended and orderly. The last for this year took place on Sunday evening.

We desire to call special attention to the Application Form for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, which appears in the advertisement pages of this week's *Freethinker*. The vigor of the Company's operations, and consequently its success, depend upon the working capital at the command of its Directors. Those who have read our announcements from time to time, and particularly those who have read between the lines when we could not well say all that might have been said, must be aware that the Company had many difficulties to encounter before it could settle down to transact its own business. These difficulties were succeeded by others of a very trying character during the first two or three months of the Company's tenancy of the shop at 1 Stationers' Hall Court. Then came the summer, which is always a dull time in the publishing trade; and the *Freethinker*, of course, can do no more than hold its own when meeting-places are closed, and so many people are holidaying. It should also be borne in mind that the war has temporarily injured all advanced movements, and therefore the sale of all advanced literature. Considering all things, the *Freethinker* has weathered the storm wonderfully. But special efforts to promote its circulation must be made during the winter; indeed, a beginning is to be made in this direction very shortly. Several new books and pamphlets are also being prepared for publication. And as the larger the volume of business done the greater is the profit, while working expenses are not increased in proportion, it is obvious that a considerable working capital is highly necessary. Now this capital should be found, and found without any further delay, by the Freethought party. We have no hesitation in saying that a thousand fresh Shares ought to be taken up in the Company between this and Christmas. We have taken the trouble to put the publication of Freethought literature, including this journal, upon a sound business footing, quite independent—as far as it can be independent—of our own personality; and we feel that we have a right to ask the party to take advantage of this instrument for the good of the cause, not only in the immediate, but probably also in the distant future. There are a good many Freethinkers, to our knowledge, who have not yet given any support to this vastly important enterprise, although they could do so without any practical inconvenience to themselves. We beg these Freethinkers to delay no longer, but to fill in the Form of Application for Shares and post it (with remittance) to the Company's secretary.

The last number of the *Liberator* (Melbourne) to hand, dated July 14, reproduces Mr. Foote's article on "Room in Heaven" from the *Freethinker*. There is also a reference to Mr. Symes's proposed visit to England, which our readers will find on another page.

Obituary.

I REGRET to record the death of yet another of our old staunch and true Secularist members in Huddersfield, Mr. Samuel Mitchell, who died after a somewhat painful illness, aged eighty-five. He was a sterling Freethinker, and an ardent admirer of Charles Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote. The Society can ill afford the repeated loss of the veterans of the "Old Guard." His oft-repeated wish for a Secular funeral was faithfully observed, and his intimate friend, Councillor Owen Balmforth, read the Secular Burial Service at the interment in Lockwood Churchyard on Wednesday, August 22, in the presence of a goodly number of relatives and friends. The local press contained a fair review of incidents and events in the life of our deceased friend.—W. H. SPIVEY.

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The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

Donation List to Date.

	£	s.	d.
John Downing: "Liberty" As unfolded in Milton's *Areopagitica*	200	0	0
J. Umpleby ...	20	0	0
Major John C. Harris, R.E.	20	0	0
Horace Seal ...	25	0	0
A Friend	25	0	0
J. C. Banks ...	10	0	0
W. Mumby ...	5	0	0
J. F. Hampson ...	4	0	0
D. Yule	10	0	0
James Neate ...	1	0	0
Mrs. Neate ...	1	0	0
R. Davison ...	2	0	0
G. J. Warren ...	1	0	0
T. P. Stewart ...	1	1	0
R. T. Nichols ...	2	2	0
C. Girtanner ...	10	10	0
David Watt ...	1	0	0
C. J. Peacock ...	5	5	0
A. H. Braine ...	1	1	0
H. Trotman ...	0	10	6
H. B. Dodds ...	0	10	0
W. Garthwaite ...	0	10	0
J. G. Dobson ...	0	10	0
J. Barry	0	10	0
T. H. Body ...	0	2	6
J. Partridge ...	0	10	6
Martin Weatherburn	0	10	0
A. G. Lye	0	5	0
E. Self	0	5	0
L. Simpson ...	0	5	0
T. Ollerenshaw ...	0	10	0
W. Barks	0	10	0
J. T. Ives	0	1	0
J. Bullock	0	5	0
A. F. Bullock ...	0	2	6
C. Handley ...	0	5	0
W. M. Constant ...	0	3	0
W. R. Axelley ...	0	10	0
D. Mitchell ...	1	0	0
Mrs. Brown ...	0	5	0
H. Payne	1	0	0
D. P. S.	1	0	0
J. E. Kins	0	5	0
C. D. Stephens ...	0	10	6
W. H. Spivey ...	0	10	0
M. Dye	0	5	0
F. W. Donaldson ...	1	1	0
A. W. Hutty ...	0	2	0
Minnie, Willie, and Teddie Hutty ...	0	3	0
R. Johnson... ...	2	2	0
H. L.	1	0	0
W. Lamb	0	10	0
L. Edmonds ...	0	5	0
T. Robertson ...	1	1	0
J. O. Bates... ...	1	0	0
H. Waller	0	5	0
F. T.	1	0	0
C. Newell	0	2	6
F. J. Voisey ...	1	1	0
Monmouth... ...	2	2	0
C. Shepherd ...	0	2	0
Samuel Hartmann.	8	0	0
C. J. Pottage ...	3	0	0
T. Bradshaw ...	0	2	6
J. R. Webbley ...	1	0	0
W. J. Barry ...	0	10	0
F. Goodwin ...	0	2	0
Charles Pegg ...	1	1	0
Mrs. M. E. Pegg...	1	1	0
Total to date	£383	2	6

The wretched cold I caught on Sunday evening, and the wearying neuralgia it entailed, took a good deal of "the work" out of me for a bit, and I must postpone for still another week the lengthy address to our party which I intend to write on this Twentieth Century Fund. Perhaps it is just as well postponed; for, in spite of the broken weather, a good many are still away on their holidays; and these are just the persons who can best afford to give. Mr. George Anderson, whose letter I promised to notice, is absent from London for a fortnight; and Mr. John Downing's letter, which I referred to last week, is one to be dealt with at leisure, rather than in a hurry. All I will add at present is that I hope all my readers will bear in mind that the first week in October is "Shilling Week," and that they are expected to send me (with a letter, if they choose to write one) at least one shilling, and as many more shillings as possible, towards this Fund. Meanwhile I am open to receive any number of names for inclusion in this special list.

G. W. FOOTE.

Death of Nietzsche.

Friedrich Nietzsche died on Saturday morning, August 25, at Weimar. Ten years ago his brain became affected, and he has since been dead to the world, under the care of his devoted sister. The immediate cause of his death was apoplexy. He was in his fifty-sixth year. Nietzsche was an ill-balanced, but still in many ways a remarkable, thinker. He despised Christianity as the religion of the unfit. He believed in the "realisation of the individual"—that is, in individual culture, self-respect, and self-assertion. He considered that, under the influence of Christianity, modern society is doing its best to defeat natural selection and to deteriorate the race. Nietzsche, like Feuerbach and Schopenhauer, was a pronounced Atheist.

SECULAR EDUCATION.—The National Secular Society's Executive has called a Conference of advanced bodies in London to consider the question of "secular education" in relation to the forthcoming London School Board elections. Various organisations have promised to send delegates. The Conference will take place on Tuesday evening (Sept. 11) at 8 in the large hall of the Club and Institute Union, Clerkenwell-road.

Doubt, and be Damned!

On the 1st of the 1st of the 1st, A.M.,
The Lord began Creation;
On the 6th of the 1st of the 1st, A.M.,
He stopped for recreation;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

In the year Eighteen hundred, or less, A.M.,
The Lord was scared by builders
Who were climbing to heav'n on a pile of bricks;
A feat which quite bewilders,
But you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

In the year Forty hundred and four, A.M.,
The Lord became a fœtus;
Like a pup and a sprat, he'd a tail and gills—
If parsons do not cheat us—
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

On the 1st of the 1st of the 1st, A.D.,
Th' Creator posed as creature,
By a navel disguised; for his navel was
His only godless feature;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

On the 8th of the 1st of the 1st, A.D.,
The Lord was vivisected;
It appears that himself he so badly made,
He had to be corrected;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

The Creator's a bachelor, sad to say,
A fact that painful, maybe,
To the purity folk, for he was, 'tis said,
The pa of Mary's baby;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

In the year three-and-thirty the Maker made
The Romans nail their Maker
To a post, which made Sol become black in th' face,
And earth a cracking quaker;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

When the Lord was sufficiently killed, *pro tem.*,
He left his corpse, "till called for,"
In a hole, while to hell went his corpseless ghost—
'Twas this "The Book" was scrawled for;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

When he called for his corpse, on the 2nd night,
Its heart resumed its pumping;
So he walked it away, took a snack of fish,
Then showed his skill in jumping;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

We are promised by God that believers all,
Through all the world, for ever,
Will be proof against damage from deadly drinks,
And need a doctor never;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

You are damned if you doubt, said the late J. C.
Of ev'rywhere, and Zion,
Who created the makers of beds, but yet
Had ne'er a bed to lie on;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

You are damned if you doubt; and the fact is clear
To those whom God engages;
For the proof of the fact is the fact that thence
The parson draws his wages;
And you're dull, if the fact seems doubtful!

If "The Book" seems devoid of the needful proof,
Of course you're forced to doubt it;
But your justified doubt will destroy your soul,
Say those that know about it;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

We are told that salvation's the work of Christ,
Who asks us to receive it;
But he left us the *worst* part to do ourselves,
For *we* must first *believe it;*
And we're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

On the last of the last of the last of all
The Lord Chief Judge will try us;
If we're lucky, we'll lie on an old Jew's chest;
If not, the Lord will fry us;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful!

As the most of our race will be damned by God,
Who *wisely* planned creation,
And does "*all for the best,*" through his *boundless love,*
Let's gladly greet damnation!
To be *lovingly damned's* delightful!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

First Delegate: "That was a fine prayer with which the convention opened." Second Delegate: "I don't know. It struck me the statistics were not presented in a way to give the Lord a clear idea of the political situation."—*Detroit Journal.*

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Talmage on Books.

THE latest thesis of the one-and-only Talmage is worthy of him—worthy of a man who knows how to multiply his adjectives, and distribute his polysyllabic substantives with so lavish a hand. He has just favored the world with his opinion on literature; and his opinion, as might be expected, is more stringent than discriminating.

He takes for his text Acts xix. 19, where the Devil-frightened converts of Ephesus, "which used curious arts," burnt their books for the edification of the Ephesian public. It is currently assumed that the "curious arts" were those of magic, fortune-telling, and so forth. But, from what we know of the people and the period referred to, the assumption is not justified. The ignorant Christians of Paul's time attributed everything beyond their understanding to the agency of demons, and it is easy to appreciate their detestation of "curious arts" from their own narrow standpoint. The destruction of the famous Alexandrian library was doubtless due to the same prejudice.

Well, the books were burnt, and the fanatical Paul rejoiced; and the fanatical Talmage (who has not the Apostle's excuse of environment) rejoices two thousand years later. He even wishes us to repeat the performance. "One of the wants of the cities of to-day is a great bon-fire of bad books and newspapers. We have enough fuel to make a blaze two hundred feet high. Many of the publishing houses would do well to throw into the blaze their entire stock of goods."

Let no one hastily assume that the editor of the American *Christian Herald* intends to make a start with his own periodical. On the contrary, he assures us that "the Lord intends the printing-press to be the chief means for the world's rescue and evangelisation." If this be true, it seems a pity that "the Lord" did not think of it earlier. But Talmage wants to see the author and journalist take their orders from the pulpit; and, in the expected Elysium, no publisher will dare to look at anything transcending the scope of Christian ethics, art, or philosophy. He wants to put the clock back twenty centuries. He desires "a purified and Gospel literature triumphing over, trampling down, and crushing out for ever that which is depraved." Later he speaks of "an honest, intelligent, aggressive, Christian printing-press." Why not say "Christian" at once, and dispense with the other adjectives? But "Christian" is never good enough to stand alone, and in the course of this sermon we are asked to make "an intelligent and Christian choice," to read "novels that are good, pure, Christian, elevating to the heart, and ennobling to the life."

"What books shall we read?" is the Talmagian inquiry. And, by way of answer, he enumerates just eleven writers, chiefly Americans, and all fictionists. The one man who saved the United States from the reproach of a sterile literature, Edgar Allan Poe, was presumedly too heterodox to be mentioned. The rev. Doctor's gallantry does not permit him to pass Maria Edgeworth, but he utterly ignores her greater sisters, George Eliot and Edna Lyall—perhaps because they were not found within "the fold." For pure decency's sake Dickens had to be recognised, Unitarian though he was. It was a pity, but it could not be avoided; and, after all, the majority of the congregation were probably ignorant of the fact.

But in the sphere of History, Poetry, and Science there was no escape. These departments of literature abounded in pit-falls of the most objectionable kind. "Infidels" like Gibbon, Froude, Lecky, Darwin, Spencer, Mill, Byron, Shelley, and Swinburne confronted De Witt's harassed gaze at every turn. So he gave the whole thing up, and confined himself to fiction.

Presumedly all writers outside Talmage's cramped and arbitrary selection of novelists must be henceforth tabooed. If this were not his intention, he should have published an *Index Expurgatorius* including the most indecent and alluring volumes. But doubtless the astute Yankee knew that, had he done so, his excited followers would have straightway besieged the wicked publishers—and cleared off all their stock! The rev. incendiary has a sort of shrewdness.

Mr. Talmage begs his auditors not to read books of this and that kind. Then, for a moment, the illogic of the position is apparent, even to him. "'But,' you will say, 'how can I find out whether a book is good or bad without reading it?' There is always something suspicious about a bad book—I never knew an exception—something suspicious in the index or style of illustration." The inquiring mind is apt to wonder how the speaker verified his suspicions, if he acted upon his own precept, and refrained from further examination.

Most of us will decline to admit that we are made of such flabby stuff as this. We shall continue to choose our own reading-matter without fear for the result. The next immoral work we chance upon will not launch us forth upon a career of profligacy. If there are men so weak and impressionable, they can never be safe in any case; they are always a menace to the common good; and the sooner they are started off upon their sky-rocket course of syphilis, religion, and death, the better.

Is it possible that the sermon will conclude without an "infidel" story? No; it is left for the finish—although it is the *pièce de résistance*.

> "Beware of lascivious pictures, young man!.....Cherish good books and newspapers. Beware of bad ones. The assassin of Lord Russell declared that he was led into crime by reading one vivid romance.....But I need not go so far off. I could tell you of a comrade who was great-hearted, noble, and generous. He was studying for an honorable profession; but he had an infidel book in his trunk, and he said to me one day: 'De Witt, would you like to read it?' I said: 'Yes, I would.' I took the book, and read it only for a few minutes. I was really startled with what I saw there, and I handed the book back to him, and said: 'You had better destroy that book.' No, he kept it. He read, he re-read it. After awhile he gave up religion as a myth. He gave up God as a nonentity. He gave up good morals as being unnecessarily stringent. I have heard of him but twice in many years. The time before last I heard of him he was a confirmed inebriate. The last I heard of him he was coming out of an insane asylum, in body and soul an awful wreck. I believe that that infidel book killed him for two worlds."

Note how we are led up to the climax by easy and natural transitions. Lasciviousness, assassination, infidelity! De Witt has something of De Wet's tactical smartness. This, however, is the only gleam of genius in the story. There is the time-honored absence of names and dates, and the quick succession in the usual order—unbelief, immorality, insanity, and death. The rev. romancer is doubtless well advised in his suppressions; he has probably heard of a certain Atheist Shoemaker.

E. R. W.

What the Bible Teaches.

MATTHEW.

THAT a young woman and a ghost [never married] were parents of a child; that the mother of Jesus was no better than she ought to have been; that his "reputed father" was a muff; that he was easily imposed upon; that the writer was an unscrupulous quoter and perverter of the Old Testament (i. 22-3); that he was a romancer; that a star guided men even to a house in a village; that the birth of Jesus was surrounded by queer dreams; that the young God owed his safety from Herod's ire to his being shifted to Egypt; that John the Baptist was fool enough to think water might morally purify; that Jesus went to be baptised by one who baptised only the repentant; that, therefore, he must have been a sinner; that the spirit of God was like a pigeon; that "the spirit" was in league with the Devil, and therefore led Jesus up to be tempted by him; that Jesus was a good hand at fasting; that the Devil was far more polite than Jesus, and seemingly much better natured; that the Devil was an expert in aeriel travelling, and could carry a man through the air [when the said man had been sufficiently reduced in weight by six weeks' fasting]; that the earth in those days was so flat and so small that the whole surface could be seen from the top of a mountain in a moment of time (iv. 8 and Luke iv. 5); that Jesus discouraged honest industry (iv. 18, 22); that the exclusive, particular, and persecuting Jews permitted Jesus to preach in their synagogues; that he must have cured sick people enough to have left all the doctors to starve; that

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poverty of spirit is a blessing; that mourning, meekness, hunger, and thirst are ditto; that ignorant Jesus's cowardly disciples were the salt and the light of the earth; that the most natural, necessary, and innocent feeling is as bad as adultery (v. 28); that all swearing is a sin; that evil should not be resisted; that people should pray for daily bread and to be saved from the evil one; that it is right to play the hypocrite to prevent people knowing that you are fasting (vi. 18); that it is wrong to lay up treasures upon earth [see how the priests are grinning at that!]; that it is a sin to take any thought for the morrow; that it is as easy to add a cubit [18 or 21 inches] to your height by taking thought as to get food and clothes that way (25, 34); that Christianity cannot be good, for a good tree cannot produce evil fruit; that it is quite right to set Devils on to or into your neighbor's pig, and so destroy them (vi. 1, 28-34); that some Devils will not budge for you unless they see you starving yourself (xvii. 19-21); that Jesus sent out a set of beggars, of whom rich quacks are always boasting (x.); that Jesus came to send a sword and to set families by the ears (34, 35); that John the Baptist neither ate nor drank (xi. 18); that Jesus did both, and to such an extent that they called him a wine-bibber, etc.; that it is quite right to repudiate your mother and brothers, sisters (xi. 1, 46-50); that the kingdom of heaven contains much of the Devil's works (xiii. 33-44); that the heart is the seat and origin of all crimes (xv. 18-9); that Jesus called a poor, distressed woman a dog (26); that he insulted most who asked him questions (xvi.); that Jesus threatened or promised to come again in that generation (28; also xxiv.); that Jesus was on good terms with those old cutthroats, Moses and Elijah (xvii. 3); that his skin shone like the sun (2); that slavery is quite proper, and an owner may do as he will with his chattels (xviii. 23-35); that Christ's father was as bad, or worse, than the worst slave-owner (35); that male believers should mutilate themselves in a way not to be described (xix. 9-12); that a camel had a better chance of getting through a needle's eye than a rich man has of getting into the kingdom of heaven [this is not believed at present] (24); that an employer can pay whatever wages he likes, and pay one man as much for an hour as others for a day, and that no one has a right to complain (xx.); that it is quite right to steal an ass or two (xxi.); quite right to raise a riot in a temple (12-16); quite right to destroy a fig-tree that does not belong to you because it did not bear fruit at an impossible season; that it is right for a king to slaughter a whole population and burn a city where murder has been committed (xxii.); that the way to treat innocent opponents is to call them hypocrites, fools, and blind, serpents, brood of vipers, etc. (xxiii.); that God forsook Jesus on the Cross, or previously (xxvii. 46); that Jesus did not ascend to heaven (xxviii. 20).

MARK.

This book teaches that the unknown writer knew nothing of Jesus's birth or parentage, or deemed them unworthy of notice; that the disciples did not fast (ii. 18); that Jesus boasted of being a wilful and deliberate deceiver (iv. 12); that he promised his dupes a hundred-fold in this life for all they gave up, a hundred brothers, sisters, parents, wives, children for every one given up to him (x. 28-30); that none are Christians that cannot cast out Devils, speak with new tongues, handle serpents with impunity, drink deadly poison without hurt, and heal the sick (xxi. 17, 18).

LUKE.

In this book the Bible teaches that the original records by eye-witnesses of what Christians believed were either lost, destroyed, unavailable, or unreliable, and therefore this writer (quite unknown) produced this work (i. 1-4); that this gospel is legendary; that decency was unknown to the author and his characters (28-41); that John the Baptist was a wild boy (80); that all Jews, no matter what their age, health, etc., had to go from whatever parts they lived at to their native place to be there taxed! (ii. 1); that Mary was put through the "purification" farce just as if her son had been "conceived in sin and shapened in iniquity" (22); that Jesus was an impudent young pug (41-52); that the mythical Jesus was descended from the mythical Adam and the mythical God (iii. 38); that Peter, the pretended first Pope, had a mother-in-law (iv. 38); that Jesus was a capital fisherman, and should have stuck to that calling (v. 4, *et seq.*); that to give away all you have is the way to be rich (vi. 38); that Jesus was fond of ointment, and dearly loved fawning women (vii. 36-80); that a Devil's name was Legion [an army]; that Mr. Legion made a barracks of one man [what he did for elbow room is not explained] (viii. 26-30); that missionaries should be spiteful (ix. x. 11, 5); that Jesus was still more spiteful and absolutely unforgiving (ix. 26); that those who are hurt by Chinese and others are not Christ's missionaries (x. 17, 19); that a love-sick, maudlin Mary is far superior to a hard-working and careful and well-behaved Martha (38-42); that Jesus boasted of being a horrid mischief-maker (xii. 46); that Jesus pretended to bewail Jerusalem, which he was plotting and intending to destroy (xiii. 34); that you must hate all you ought to love in order to be Christ's disciple (xlv. 25-33); that a sharp and embezzling steward is to be commended (xvi. 8, 9); that future bliss is prepared for those who have nothing and are totally destitute of humanity, and hell for the rich and benevolent; that the humane will be damned (xvi. 19, *et seq.*); that men ought to do nothing else but pray (xviii. 11); that all Christ's enemies were to be slain before his face (xiv. 27); that Christ's missionaries should never lose so much as a hair of their head through persecution (xxi. 18); that Jesus was coming again in that generation (25-32); that his disciples should be twelve kings, reigning over the twelve tribes of Israel! (xx. 11, 30); that Jesus, the unlimited boaster, was much frightened when his foes set upon him (xxii.); that the disciples, and especially Peter, were a set of cowards, like their master (54-60); that Jesus never attempted to defend himself, though Pilate gave him every chance to do so (xxiii.).

JOHN.

This book says nothing of the birth of Jesus or his infancy. It speaks of one Word or Logos [was it King Log?] who was both with God and *was* God (i.). It teaches that Logos made all things; this Logos was the light that lighteth every man—that is, the sun; that Logos was made flesh; and it indulges in plenty of jargon besides; that John the Baptist called Logos a lamb; that Jesus turned 140 gallons of water into wine for those who had already well drunk at a wedding feast (ii.); that he raised a riot in the temple (13-16); that he bamboozled Nicodemus over new birth, wind, "heavenly things," etc. (iii.); that he talked nonsense to a Samaritan woman (iv.); that an angel came down at intervals and stirred the dirty water in a Jerusalem pool, and any sick man who at once stepped in was healed (v.); that Jesus went one better and cut the angel out; that Jesus boasted that he would raise the dead (25-29); that Jesus disgusted his most civilised disciples by telling them they must eat his flesh and drink his blood (vi. 38, 41, 50-60, 66); that Jesus selected one devil to be his disciple (70, 71); that he deceived his brother by a falsehood (vii. 1-10); that Jesus, contrary to Bible command, screened a woman taken in adultery (viii.); that he grossly insulted the Jews by telling them the Devil was their father (37-42); that Jesus was the good shepherd [Mercury's title], and had to flee from the Jews (x.); that Jesus bamboozled Martha by declaring that whosoever believed in him should never die (xi. 25, 26); that he raised the perfectly useless Lazarus from the dead; that Jesus allowed himself to be treated as a king (vii. 12-19); boasted he would draw all men to himself (35); that he assisted Judas to betray him (xiii. 18-30); that, if all Jesus did could be written, the world itself would not be large enough probably to hold the books! (xxi. 25).

—*Liberator* (Melbourne). JOS. SYMES.

For my part, I imagine that, if the Eternal in his severity were to send me to hell, I should succeed in escaping from it. I would send up to my creator a supplication that would make him smile. The course of reasoning by which I would prove to him that it was through his fault that I was damned would be so subtle that he would find some difficulty in replying. The fate which would suit me best is Purgatory—a charming place, where many delightful romances begun on earth must be continued.—*Ernest Renan.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Re-open September 9.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A. B. Moss.
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A. B. Moss.
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, E. Pack.
CLAPHAM COMMON: 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, F. A. Davies.
FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, F. A. Davies.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15. C. Cohen.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.
HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, E. Pack.
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. Cohen.
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, S. E. Easton.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; 7.15, A lecture. September 5, at 8.15, R. P. Edwards.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, E. White.
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, C. Watts, "Secularism: Its Necessity and Superiority."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): H. P. Ward—11.30, "The Story of the Trial and Imprisonment of G. W. Foote for Blasphemy"; 2.30, "Did Jesus Christ Rise from the Dead?" 6.30, "Secularism a Better System than Christianity."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Stanley Jones, "Buddhism and Christianity."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): W. Heaford—11, "The Claims of Christianity"; 3, "The Philosophy of Secularism;" 7, "Woman and the Bible." Tea at 5. The first lecture to be given near the Monolith—weather permitting.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "How we Come by our Knowledge"; 7, Lecture arrangements.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—September 2, m., Kingsland; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—September 2, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—September 2, Glasgow; 10, Debate at Bradford. 16, Birmingham. October 1 and 2, Debate at Birmingham. December 9, Glasgow.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—September 2, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 9, Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 36. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

Empty Churches.

WITH ineffable cheek, Church of England ecclesiastics just now are inquiring in nearly all their weekly journals, Why do not the masses come to church? They give despairing accounts of empty churches, of the indifference of parishioners whom they visit; of a disregard to the Church in respect of the "solemn ordinances" in which she is supposed to figure and receive fees; of an unsatisfactory number of communicants; and of a growing spirit of scepticism in all classes of society which is directly antagonistic to the Church—High, Low, or Broad.

The situation is serious—for the ecclesiastics. No one else is very much concerned. Explanations are hardly necessary, either of the indifference or the hostility. The Church rejoices in a rotten foundation—which, according to the hymn, is "Jesus Christ our Lord." It is a serious task for her, in the first instance, to establish his existence. It is still more difficult for her to substantiate all that is attributed to him in some scrappy, contradictory, and all-too-brief records which have drifted down to us in a haphazard fashion, so that faith, otherwise credulity, is necessary to their acceptance.

The Church herself, as by law established, is, at the present time, one of the rottenest institutions on the face of the globe. She lives, not in the sympathies of the people, but upon pelf, which represents originally a robbery from an older and a better Church than herself, supplemented in later centuries by whatever she should get through fashion, force, and fraud. The Church has ever been the greatest enemy of progress. From the bishops in the House of Lords, who have always supported reactionary measures, to the parson on the rural bench who would send a child to prison for stealing a turnip—they are all the same: grasping, arrogant, vindictive, and obstinately ignorant, in the sense that they will *not* keep themselves abreast with the times. There are bright exceptions—and one is glad to know that the number is increasing: brilliant intellects and large-hearted, broad-minded men, who, somehow or other, find themselves in "orders."

But they are hampered and interfered with in their efforts to make the Church in some way acceptable to the people. None know this better than themselves. They may be Ritualists, or men of such diverse stamp as the Rev. Carlile and the Rev. Haweis. They are in the Church, but not of it. The Rev. Dennis Hird, in quite recent times, endeavored to leaven the orthodox lump with a little common sense, but was forced to leave the Establishment—apparently in disgust. The Church is no place for any but harmless imbeciles, who seem always longing to join the Romish Church, but dare not, and men who are constantly racking their brains to make the Cross of Calvary fit in with common sense.

No wonder there is a serious dearth of candidates for ordination. Who would think of finding his life's occupation in an Establishment, torn by internecine strife over the most trumpery questions, and in the bulk of its doctrines and teachings miles behind the knowledge even of the "man in the street"?

There is an arrogance which exceeds everything in the mere name of the Establishment. Church of England, indeed! Out of the forty millions of inhabitants of this island there are probably not more than two million communicants. On the strength of this, we must have an Archbishop of Canterbury with £15,000 a year and two palaces, and another archbishop with £10,000, and a number of bishops all with respectable incomes running into four figures. And this in connection with the Gospel of a kind of God-intoxicated Gaberlunzie, who did not know where to lay his head, and who, moreover, made poverty a virtue, and denounced riches as a curse, if not, indeed, a crime.

The *Official Church Year-Book* states that five years ago the accommodation—mark that word—provided in parish churches, chapels of ease, mission rooms, and other buildings, represented 6,778,288; for the year ending Easter, 1899, the number was 6,979,150. The increase, it will be seen, is not at all in proportion to the added population. "In any case," says a religious weekly, "bearing in mind the lack of attendance in many churches, the position religiously is sad enough. If we suppose 5,000,000 of the sittings are filled, what of the 30,000,000 or more people who are absent? We may be thankful that other communions presumably furnish an equal supply to that of our Church, but still how the question comes home to us, 'Where are the nine?' When we think of the growing religious indifference and the abounding neglect of public worship, the great and burning question of the hour is not the number of sittings, but how to secure the far better use of the existing provision and greatly increase it."

In its despair at the neglect of church attendance, the *Church Times* is moved to bitterly reproachful comments. It says: "For the most part we seem to be settling down contentedly to the expectation of seeing only a small minority of the people assemble for Divine worship. A church which holds five hundred is pulled down as useless because there are not more than eighteen hundred inhabitants in the parish. These are conveniently annexed to a neighboring parish of three thousand souls with a commodious church holding nearly eight hundred. This sort of thing has come to seem so natural as to call for no comment, unless some enthusiast avers that the doomed building might be utilised for religious purposes unconnected with its own parish.....It is a serious fact that in towns a parish where churchgoers number a tenth of the population is a marvel of successful work, while even in the country a place where they amount to a fourth of the people is an object of respectful curiosity."

Then the *Church Times* inquires: "Why does this minority go to church? A searching inquiry will reveal a state of things even more disquieting than the statistics." It then goes on to say:—

> "Motives to church-going are various. In some cases they are hard to seek. There are the young men who stand or sit in listless attitudes, looking vacuously over their collars, one hand in pocket, the other holding a book, open at any convenient page. What brings them here? This kind of worshipper is not peculiar to England, but his manner varies with his country. In Germany he picks his teeth. In Italy he hears Mass with a patronising air, tilting his chair, and surveying the toes of his shoes. Again, there are the girls who whisper and giggle behind hymn-books. These also are found everywhere. In France they affect *Salut*, and sing lustily the tunes that take their fancy. Is it for the tunes that these go to church?"

Other motives for church-going are enumerated by this candid ecclesiastical print:—

> "There are the superior persons who always go to church in the country for the sake of setting an example; it would be useless, of course, to do so in town, where they are lost in the crowd. There are the frankly mercenary, who go to church for what they can get, and

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who stay away if the result falls short of their calculations. There are the children who go to church because they are sent, to be out of the way. Their first exercise of independence is naturally to renounce these childish things."

As to the attempt to hold daily church services, nothing could be more conspicuous than the failure which has followed in the majority of cases. The *Times* recently had a correspondence on the subject. One writer mentioned the case of an uncle of his who held daily services in his parish church, his only congregation all the year round being his own family and the man who rang the bell. He added: "It often struck me, when visiting him, what was the use of these unattended daily services." "One such devoted rector whom we wot of," says the *Church Gazette*, "was not long since asked this very question. He said it brought down blessings. 'But how far do these extend?' 'Well,' he replied, 'I suppose they extend as far as the borders of the parish.'"

One writer in a Church paper, a little time ago, pointed out that the absence from church was not appreciably remedied among the poorer classes even by the Church methods of charity and relief adopted for this very purpose. Their object is far too commonly that of attracting poor people to church by something approaching to bribery; and all is done with no sort of precaution against demoralising and pauperising the recipients, but, as it seems, solely with a view to make them church-goers, whether they like it or not.

"Thus there is widely in vogue a system of parochial doles, almshouses, or soup kitchens where benefits depend not on merit so much as on churchmanship. The doles may, perhaps, take the form of loaves to be given to the pious poor who attend the morning service. They do it for loaves, and probably fishes; but these latter are to take another form. It may be that of a yearly gift of money, or of a ton of coals, or of some blankets, or of being put into a comfortable almshouse, where the poor old souls have to go to their little chapel and patter their unwilling prayers, and where, perhaps, the elderly pauper who is to recite them as unwillingly has his extra sixpence weekly."

Yet, with all this semi-bribery, poor people will not, in the main, go to church. As for the typical independent artisan or laboring man, the very last thing that enters his head on a Sunday is to go to any gospel-shop—Established or Dissenting. There is, for him, a much-needed extra rest in bed, the Sunday paper, his pipe, perhaps a bit of digging and planting in his garden (if he has one), possibly a stroll, and a crowning solace in a good dinner (if he can get one). What cares he for church, where everything strikes him as cant and show and make-believe, from the parson in the pulpit, who utters vague platitudes, interspersed with meaningless texts, to the fashionable people in the pews, who are obviously there for any and every purpose except that of devout worship, or who, if they worship, worship they know not—perhaps care not—what.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

IN opening this article I desire to call attention to what was said at the outset of the present appeal. Reference was made to the immense sums of money that were being raised by various Churches, in addition to their ordinary revenues, for the purpose of promoting the success of the Christian superstition in Great Britain. The Wesleyan Methodists alone are raising, and have nearly raised, a million pounds. Other bodies are raising smaller, but still large, amounts in proportion to their size and strength. And although the Roman Catholic Church does not imitate other Churches, it has nevertheless been amassing great sums in order to hold its own, and even to do something more; one of its projects being the erection of a vast and costly cathedral at Westminster, which is approaching its completion, and will be opened in November. These lavish preparations on the part of the Churches are a much more serious menace than many Freethinkers imagine to the Rationalist movement in this country. The friends of Freethought were therefore told that they were "under a serious obligation to take timely and ample precautions." "Good intentions alone," it was observed, "will not suffice; nor will courage, ability, and enthusiasm, without resources. The principles of modern warfare are carried into the regions of politics and religion. Existing society is based upon property, and power accompanies wealth. The war between reason and superstition will therefore be very largely decided by the means at the command of the respective armies. This truth is fully recognised by the leaders of Christianity, and should be as fully recognised, not only by the leaders, but by all the supporters of Freethought."

What the Freethought party was asked to do, then, was to make a special effort, worthy of its principles and traditions, and adequate to the occasion. It was expected that Freethinkers would do more than see what loose cash they could spare from their pockets at the moment. Even a little self-denial was not beyond the bounds of a reasonable calculation. Up to the present, however, I must confess, personally, to a little disappointment. A few have acted nobly, with spirit and promptitude; and I thank them, in the name of the cause, for which I have some right to speak. But the great majority of those who can afford to give to this Fund have remained silent and inactive. Perhaps they are only waiting, and will be heard from presently. I earnestly hope so. At the same time, I beg them not to wait too long. Something is due to me and my colleagues, who are carrying on, amidst many difficulties, and not too many encouragements, the work of our movement. Schooled as we are by long and hard experience, we are still but human, and the vigor of our efforts *must* depend to some extent upon the spirit which prevails amongst our constituents. If they are slack, careless, or apathetic, we are deprived of a valuable stimulus to exertion.

No definite figure was aimed at or suggested in the beginning, but I now say, without the slightest hesitation, that our party ought to raise at least £1,000 for this Fund. That amount is not colossal, but it will put fresh life into our operations; for a very little money has always been made to go a very long way in our organisation and propaganda.

I may add that I have had a special meeting of the N. S. S. Executive summoned to consider some plans of action which I have long had in mind, and which may be put into operation during the approaching winter. These plans will be publicly explained after they are discussed and (I trust) adopted.

Meanwhile I appeal to Freethinkers who can afford to give something—and there are hundreds of them—to send me promises and donations, to be redeemed some time before the close of the present year. It would be pleasant to have a good list of fresh donors in next week's *Freethinker*.

Mr. John Downing, who has generously promised £200 towards this Fund, wishes at the same time to do honor to the memory of glorious John Milton, whose *Areopagitica* is one of the great landmarks in the literature of liberty. A piece of writing which is so dear to such a Freethinker deserves special attention, and I propose to notice it, and his letter about it, in an early issue of this journal; in particular relation to a beautiful little pocket edition of this immortal masterpiece, which has just been included in the Temple Classics. In the interim, however, I may inquire if there is not another English Freethinker who will put a handsome donation against the name of William Shakespeare. Is there a Scottish Freethinker who will celebrate in the same way the splendid name of Robert Burns?

Mr. Downing suggests that a list of contributors to this Twentieth Century Fund should be printed on a sheet, with quotations under it about "The Sacredness of Freethought" from Copernicus, Galileo, Buckle, and other lights of progress. This would, he thinks, lift the Sacred Cause out of the domain of party, and show that our existence as a free people depends on the prevalence, the paramount existence, of "Freethought." Mr. Downing's suggestion is one that may well be adopted. It is in contemplation to issue sheets for the collection of subscriptions to this Fund.

Mr. George Anderson, whose letter respecting the

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necessity of suitable headquarters for Freethought in London has already been dealt with, has forwarded another letter to the N. S. S. Secretary. He says:—

> "You are trying to raise a Fund for something, but for what is not stated. This keeps me from subscribing. In addition to a proposition I made some weeks ago, there are other objects to which I would subscribe. (1) To give an honorarium to the President on account of the expenditure he has made for a number of years in conducting the Society. (2) To pay lecturers for advocating our principles, especially in breaking up new ground, according to the opinion of the Council. (3) To provide lecturers with literature to be given away, as well as that to be sold and accounted for. I have read of the President sending lecturers into the provinces at his own expense. I think the Society should recoup him for this, and will do so if it is properly put before them. I think that others will subscribe as well as I would if they knew what for. When I know how the subscriptions are to be applied, I will in all probability subscribe."

Mr. Anderson may take it from me that the objects he specifies will certainly be included in our plans for the expenditure of this Fund, as they are part of the inevitable work of our movement. If he does not consider *my* assurance sufficient, I shall be happy to give him the assurance of the whole Executive, after the special meeting already referred to; that is to say, in the course of next week. Personally, however, I do not seek or desire any compensation for past losses. I am perfectly satisfied, at least for the present, with the arrangement made by the Secular Society, Limited. Seeing that some provision was necessary, from some source or other, the Board resolved a few months ago to pay me an Honorarium of £50 a year, and another £50 for expenses. There are many expenses attending my office which cannot easily be booked. For ten years I never charged a penny on this account, not even for a postage stamp. But let the dead past bury its dead. These expenses are now provided for legitimately. And I certainly do not wish the Twentieth Century Fund to bring *me* any pecuniary advantage. I am not appealing in any way for myself, but for the work, the interests, the honor of the Freethought party.

The Board of the Secular Society, Limited, desires me to explain to our party why it would be perilous to purchase or build a Hall in London on the commercial basis of a Company with share capital. I have no room to do this in the present article, but I will deal with the subject next week. It is a matter of great and grave importance.

In conclusion, I desire all my readers to bear in mind that the first week in October is "Shilling Week." During that period I expect a large number of them to send me one shilling, or more, towards this Twentieth Century Fund. It will be an opportunity for the "rank and file" to contribute. Each may only give a little, but in the multitude of subscribers there is wealth.

G. W. Foote.

"Quo Vadis?"

When *The Sign of the Cross* was produced at the Lyric Theatre, some critics were bold enough to suggest a certain resemblance between that play and a Polish novel entitled *Quo Vadis?** It was alleged that the main incidents were identical, and that the plots differed in no vital particular. This imputation of plagiarism was perhaps unfair. Great minds sometimes run in similar channels; and there seems no reason why Wilson Barrett and Henryk Sienkiewicz—neither of whom has any title to literary greatness—may not similarly have found themselves working at each other's elbow.

About the beginning of last May, Mr. Whitney presented Strange's adaptation of *Quo Vadis?* at the Adelphi, where it ran for a few nights only. After some legal preliminaries, Mr. Barrett arranged to bring out a rendering of his own. It is to this version, lately presented at the Theatre Metropole, that the following remarks apply.

Quo Vadis? has a cast of twenty-seven characters, Pagans and Christians—to say nothing of the "slaves, gladiators, nobles, lictors, guards, citizens, etc." It has four acts, comprising thirteen different scenes. Mr. Barrett (or Mr. Barrett's manager) has something of Kiralfy's spectacular genius, and from this point of view the play is a complete success.

The "plot" is briefly thus. Vinicius, nephew of Petronius, falls in love with Lygia, a Christian hostage. Poppœa, Empress of Rome, conceives a passion for Vinicius, and a corresponding hatred for Lygia. Petronius, the *Elegantiæ Arbiter*,* has great influence with Nero, and uses it on Lygia's behalf. Lygia (with the Christians generally) is subject to Nero's persecution, from which she is effectively rescued, chiefly through the agency of the *Arbiter*. In the end, Petronius loses favor at Court, and dies by his own hand.

Mr. Barrett's great mistake is his literary affectation. He obviously thinks himself a stylist, and, inspired by this delusion, flings the most tawdry commonplaces across the footlights with an air of profound wisdom. In *Quo Vadis?* as in former plays, he affects a Scriptural style. His method of accomplishing this is extremely simple. All you have to do is to write your drama in *fin-de-siècle* English, and then insert a number of thees, thous, hasts, and whithers in place of their modern equivalents. It is true that the method has disadvantages. The English idiom sometimes gets curiously mixed in a medley of archaisms. A Roman general refers to "out-flanking" an enemy. Poppœa so forgets her environment as to exclaim: "You cannot see me to advantage!" And the Christian heroine is so dead to anachronism that she springs this astounding remark upon Petronius: "Nothing has ever done what this little emblem has accomplished." Fancy such a sentence in the Bible! And imagine the "accomplishments" of the Cross thus familiarly referred to in the first century after Christ!

There is a strong family likeness between this play and *The Sign of the Cross*. The playwright has not allowed a too rigid adhesion to the incidents of Sienkiewicz's novel to prevent the introduction of his own favorite effects. We again have the Neronic revels—wherein the chorus girls have to look as wicked as possible; and the secret gathering of Christians—wherein the same ladies are required to appear as patterns of virtue. Once more the "brethren" indulge in un-Christlike choruses, till their interruption and arrest by Roman guards. Then there is the agony business in the dungeons of the arena, where they cackle piously within, while the supers howl stridently in the wings "without."

The first act finishes with a characteristic Barrettian *tableau*. An order from Nero requires Lygia to leave her friends, and be confined within the imperial walls. Amid a scene of heartbreaking sorrow she advances to the footlights, casts her eyes devoutly upward, and exclaims: "He whom I serve will stand by me and protect me—even in the palace of Cæsar!" And, while the curtain was rung down to the cheers of an excited audience, I was thinking how particularly good that "stand by" was.

The leading character of Petronius is played with rare skill by Mr. Millward. He is the perfect type of old Rome—dignified, courageous, and honorable; and even the hot partisanship of Mr. Barrett cannot make the Christians look otherwise than contemptible by contrast. Like the Devil in *Paradise Lost*, Petronius defeats the author's purpose, and remains the one heroic, living figure in the piece. Mr. Strange, in his version at the Adelphi, resisted an obvious temptation. But, alas, I know Mr. Barrett; and throughout the play I am haunted by the consciousness that in the end the *Arbiter* will turn Christian and become commonplace.

Did a gleam of artistic insight save Mr. Barrett from so wretched a consummation? As a matter of fact, Petronius does not, in actual practice, become a convert. The thing, however, is hinted; and in this way, apparently, the playwright spares his conscience. Petronius is dying; the poison-cup is emptied; and in his last utterance he gasps these words: "What said those Christians? Another life—better—brighter—!" And upon this crowning absurdity—the assumption that the idea of a future life was unknown to Paganism—the curtain falls.

* "Whither goest thou?"

* Arbiter of Fashion.

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I have indicated that the *Quo Vadis?* Christians are somewhat colorless. They are, indeed, the most melancholy crowd of invertebrates ever presented upon a stage. By juxtaposition with the virile Pagans they degenerate into shadows. Mr. Barrett evidently recognises how he is handicapped in this respect; and yet he cannot entirely throw the non-resisting, meek-and-mild business overboard. So *en revanche* he introduces one Ursus, a Christian "strong man," whose muscles, by the way, are rather too obviously unreal. This pious Hercules is a perfect miracle of strength, and he despatches two Roman gladiators with little more than a glance. He is an extremely combative, not to say quarrelsome, individual; and all without prejudice to his orthodoxy. The presumedly Christian audience at the Metropole evidently admired him very much. In the *grand tableau*, where he is represented twisting the neck of an enormous bull, the applause was deafening, and the curtain had to be raised a dozen times. This is the sort of thing that appeals to up-to-date Christians. But when, on another occasion, the newly converted Vinicius wishes to resist the Roman guards, and the saintly Crispus reminds him that his first religious duty is to submit, there is no applause. It is not heroic, but it is indisputably Christian; and what is indisputably Christian is correspondingly obnoxious to popular sentiment.

The familiarity with Christ's teachings which so strangely distinguished the Pagans of Mr. Barrett's former play* is equally noticeable in *Quo Vadis?* "You are commanded to love and be merciful," remarks Vinicius to the too frigid Lygia. Like Marcus Superbus, he succumbs simultaneously to her beauty and her religion. But in *The Sign of the Cross* the Prefect is introspective. "Is it her faith that makes her thus beautiful? or doth she beautify her faith?" he asks. Vinicius is much more artless. "Art thou a Christian?" demands a friend. Vinicius replies in the negative; then adds, with delicious *naïveté*, "But soon may be!" There is another "convert" among the subordinate characters. He is a Roman jailer, and has been much affected by the fortitude of Christian prisoners. He only retains his position in the Emperor's service because imprisonment and torture of Christians are good for the progress of their creed! "Nero has not destroyed Christianity—he has built it!" declares this far-sighted warder of the seventh decade.†

Whatever popularity may be gained by *Quo Vadis?* will not be due to skilful construction or artistic insight. Its spectacular effects may save it from entire failure. But the chief element of success in the play is its appeal to patriotism. On the face of it there seems something absurd in the discovery of such an element in a work dealing with ancient times and foreign people. But the Englishman is commonly taught to identify his country with his creed. When you exalt Christianity, you pander to his national pride. It is nothing that Mr. Barrett's Christians are all foreigners. To the Englishman they are compatriots. They represent his country's religion, which he honestly believes responsible for his country's greatness. He cheers the downfall of Paganism for intrinsically the same reason that he celebrated the capture of Cronje. Consciously or otherwise, the "religious play" evokes that racial animosity which is the chief constituent of modern "patriotism."

E. R. W.

* See *The Sign of the Cross*, by G. W. Foote. † A.D. 64.

The Universality of Religion: What is it Worth?

What is called by one prominent writer "the universal testimony of the human consciousness to the certitude of religious truth" is a favorite plea among all orders of religious advocacy. From the street-corner evangelist, whose mental condition is far more pathological than normal, to the highly-placed and highly-paid professor, who veils his general disbelief in religious doctrines by emphasising his special disbelief in a too complete trust in human reason, there is the same triumphant appeal to the universality of religious beliefs among mankind. So far as it goes, this universality is a fact. That the majority of people, past and present, have indulged in some form of religious belief is a statement that none will be inclined to deny, however differently they may interpret the phenomena. The mere existence of religious beliefs is indisputable; their influence on human affairs is unmistakable; but whether these beliefs are solidly based on the essential facts of human nature, whether their influence has been universally for good, with the relative strength of these beliefs in uncivilised and civilised times, are questions to which the religious advocate seldom addresses himself, and beside which their mere universality is of trifling importance.

For, to the scientific student, this universality of religious beliefs is not only not surprising, but, if it were otherwise, much of our present reading of primitive human history would be altogether at fault. We have long outgrown the belief that religions are manufactured articles, designed with an eye to promoting the interests of priests and kings—although such a view of the matter was far more frequently attributed by religious advocates to their critics than it was held by the critics themselves. To us religious beliefs are natural and inevitable expressions of mental culture at one stage of human development. They are as natural to the childhood of the race as are measles or scarlet fever to the infancy of the individual. The human mind, whether it be civilised or uncivilised, expresses the same general laws in its phenomena; and exactly the same mental processes that lead a modern scientist to associate the movements of the planets with the same force that governs the fall of a stone, led our primitive ancestors to read their own will and intelligence into nature at large, and afterwards to tremble before and worship the creations of their own imagination. We do not reason *differently* to uncivilised people; we have only learned to group our experiences more accurately, and not place in the same class things that have no relation to each other. Consequently, all that this universality of religious beliefs means is that, as the human mind is everywhere fundamentally alike, the same general conclusions have always been drawn from the same general conditions. Were it otherwise, the uniformity of mental operations would be non-existent and a science of mind impossible.

One might be inclined to place more reliance upon the argument from the universality of religious beliefs if these were always, or even generally, adopted by people when they had reached years of mental maturity. But this is far from being the case. Among a civilised people religious beliefs are never adopted as the result of knowledge or reflection. They find themselves in possession of these beliefs, and reason on them afterwards. Under all the specious excuses put forward by men and women *why* they retain their religion lies the basal fact that it was impressed upon them before they were old enough to intelligently question its teaching. As a prominent clergyman recently remarked, during the course of a sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral:—

> "Consider for a moment by virtue of what reasons do the mass of Jews and Christians believe in such a Being (God). Is it by virtue of those observations of nature or those philosophical disquisitions by which the being and nature of God have been defended and attempted to be proved? As a matter of fact, there are not many persons who have read such arguments, or who are competent to judge of their validity.....They are not, and never have been, the actual basis and foundation of the faith of the mass of believers. The simple fact of the case is this: that men and women have had put before them from their earliest years certain messages from God. .....These are, from the first, sounding in the ears of children, of the young, and of the old, of the well-instructed and of the imperfectly-instructed, and they command allegiance."

Exactly. All this amounts to is an admission of the truth of what has been so often said in these columns—namely, that people take their religious beliefs as they take the cut of their clothes—from the society to which they happen to belong, with the difference that, while a certain amount of nonconformity in the matter of dress or food is permitted or expected, nonconformity in matters of religious belief has been usually treated as the gravest of crimes. It is puzzling to see, however, after Dr. Wace's admission, what value is left in the argument from general testimony.

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But whatever satisfaction any religionist may derive from the fact that the majority hold some kind of religion—and to the average individual there is a sheep-like feeling of satisfaction in the feeling that he is one of a crowd—this feeling might be weakened by another consideration that is equally patent—that is, that the more civilised a people become, the less hold has religion upon them. Among savages the belief in supernaturalism is pretty general. The few exceptions that were thought to exist have been shown to be not such, the confusion arising from investigators either not inquiring deeply enough or else restricting the meaning of religion to its higher and later manifestations. Savage life presents us with the picture of tribes of people whose lives are absolutely governed by superstitions of some form or other. And every step of their subsequent development involves a repudiation of some portion of their religious beliefs. The planting of crops, the breeding of cattle, the building of boats, the first faltering steps that man takes in any and all of the arts and sciences, involve a closer study of the natural properties of things, and a consequent diminution of the area over which supernaturalism rules. In the history of any single nation, as in the history of the race at large, to become civilised is to become dereligionised; and the more complete the process of civilisation becomes, the greater the amount of unbelief existing. The most advanced nations of the world to-day are not, as is often said, the most Christian; they are the least so. Russia and Spain are far more religious than either Great Britain, the United States, France, or Germany, and they are less advanced in the arts of civilisation. It is in the most advanced countries that we find scepticism strongest; for scepticism is, as Buckle said, not the result of progress, but its essential condition.

So that, in place of the formula that the truth of religion is demonstrated by its universality, we may, with the historic process in our mind's eye, lay down the counter proposition, that the whole development of the race is a march from Theism in the direction of practical Atheism. If man is religious in the earlier stages of his history, he becomes less so in his later phases. Such religion as he possesses now is not a product of present-day knowledge, but a legacy from a less civilised phase of existence. As man carries in his physical structures rudimentary organs that are to the scientist unmistakable evidences of his animal origin, so he carries in his emotional and intellectual nature traces of irrational and savage beliefs. And just as these physical structures have dwindled owing to disuse, so religious beliefs have been, and are, steadily losing their force in the face of developing knowledge.

A brief glance at any, or all, of the sciences will demonstrate this. There is no science that has been so closely intertwined with religious beliefs as has been astronomy. Not merely in the purely savage state, where the stars and planets are frequently regarded as actually living beings, but among comparatively advanced people, a close relationship existed. To-day there is no science that is so free from supernaturalism. The brilliant generalisations of Kepler, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Laplace, have for ever reduced all astronomical phenomena to problems of physics. Geology, because a much younger science than astronomy, was never so completely theologised; but the reduction of the causes of all geologic phenomena to purely unconscious forces has wiped out of modern text-books the many references to the power and majesty of Deity that made earlier ones ridiculous. Religious beliefs never linger long where knowledge is in any degree exact; always and everywhere the extent to which man has invoked God to account for what he saw was in exact proportion to his ignorance concerning it.

In the sciences that deal specifically with living beings theology has lingered longer, because here the phenomena are much more complex, the causes are more obscure, and exact knowledge is not so easily reached. We do not *know* the exact manner in which life originated, although there exists no doubt, to a really scientific mind, that the distinction between the living and the non-living is merely a convenient one, and that between the two great classes of facts there is no real break. We do not know the exact relation between molecular movements in the brain and nervous structure and thought, although here again there can be little doubt that the relation between the two is that of organ and function. Still, so long as our knowledge is not exact on these points, it will always give a chance for the religionist to use the ignorance of science as the warranty for his own beliefs—a chance that he is never slow to avail himself of. To the thoroughly religious mind, a word is usually as good as an explanation; and the word "God"—that asylum of ignorance, to use Spinoza's phrase—may continue to do duty in these departments until a more complete development drives it from these, as it has been driven from others.

Apart, therefore, from the question of whether the decline of religion is to be hailed with acclamation or faced with fear, its existence is a demonstrable fact. The gods grow fewer in number, poorer in quality, and more limited in their jurisdiction. If they are not, like Alexander, sighing for more worlds to conquer, they are at least dying for want of a dominion to rule over. A king without a throne is a nonentity. A God that has no hand in the regulating of the world is an absurdity; and, although we may not perceive the ridiculous nature of such a deity at once, it forces itself on public attention sooner or later. To the argument, then, that the vast majority of people always *have* believed in religion, we need only point to the conditions that gave religion birth. To those who plead that a large number still believe in it, we can reply that they do so in a decreasing measure. The growth of the race is from supernaturalism to naturalism. The Theist, therefore, is not merely combatting an argument; he is fighting and seeking to reverse the whole process of mental evolution.

C. COHEN.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of Executive meeting held at 1 Stationer's Hall Court, on Thursday, August 30; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, J. Cooper, W. Heaford, W. Leate, A. B. Moss, B. Munton, J. Neate, E. W. Quay, V. Roger, H. J. Stace, T. Shore, F. Schaller, T. Thurlow, G. J. Warren, C. Watts, T. Wilmot.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Cash statement received and adopted.

On behalf of the Sub-Committee appointed to make arrangements for the Conference *re* Secular Education, Mr. Cohen reported the result of his attendance at the Metropolitan Radical Federation, where he was most favorably received, and three delegates were elected. The Executive then proceeded to elect its own delegates—namely, Messrs. G. W. Foote, A. B. Moss, C. Watts, W. Heaford, C. Cohen, T. Shore, and G. J. Warren.

The following resolution was then carried unanimously: "That this Executive is of opinion that definite and special 'Secular Education' candidates, giving it first place in their program, should be found to contest the approaching London School Board elections."

The Delegation to the Paris Congress was next discussed. Mr. Foote informed the meeting that pressure of business would keep him in London, and Mr. Heaford would therefore be the only delegate. Mr. Roger said he was going to Paris himself, and he was asked to represent the Society with Mr. Heaford, to which he consented.

The President indicated a scheme for a six months' experiment in lecture work, fuller details of which he promised to lay before a special meeting to be held on Thursday, September 13. The meeting then adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

Religious "Corner" Men.

WHEN the curtain rises upon a group of "nigger" minstrels they are generally found to be seated in a semi-circle. Somewhat similar is the order with the religious groups who monopolise the street corners on Sunday evenings, only for real arrant nonsense the latter persons describe a whole circle. One walks out into the Sabbath evening and passes band upon band of these shouting, gesticulating pilgrims—"Yus, once I was a miserable sinner" at one corner, and we know that the professional convert has been turned on. As we go on we hear sundry remarks concerning "Lamb," which gives us pleasant memory of mint sauce and green peas. Further along the air is quite sulphurous as a gentleman in red breathes forth threats of damnation, hell fire, and other portions of the gospel of love. One individual, though, fairly gave the game away. Pointing to an adjacent public-house, he exclaimed: "There lies the road to destruction," and he turned round and pointed to his church, "Come to Jesus and be saved." Business is business.

FRANK HALL.

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Acid Drops.

MR. JOB WILLIAMS has been writing to the papers against the action of the London County Council in regard to the Public Parks under its control. It seems to us, however, that he and his friends have a very slender grievance. Christians have had their own way in nearly everything so long that they cannot understand being placed under restraint. Mr. Williams forgets that the primary purpose of the Parks is recreation. It is simply impossible to let anybody and everybody sell things and distribute printed matter in such places. Tradesmen would soon be there with advertisements, and the ground would be littered with handbills. It seems to us that the County Council has effected a reasonable compromise. A place in each Park is set aside for public meetings, and within the limits of these meetings the sale of literature is permitted. True, the County Council exacts that copies of the literature sold shall be deposited at its office, and this is called a "censorship." But some sort of precaution seems necessary, and it will be time to cry out when this theoretical censorship becomes a practical hindrance to freedom. Up to the present we have not heard of any case of interference.

With regard to collections, the County Council has made another sensible regulation. They may be made at meetings, providing they are not taken up by and for individuals. This has had the effect of clearing the Parks of a number of adventurers, who went there merely to pass round the hat for themselves, and had become a perfect nuisance. A few loud-mouthed and vile-tongued Christian Evidence fellows, unconnected with any real organisation, have disappeared since they were unable to "make a bit."

Citizens cannot claim precisely the same rights in a public place that they exercise in their private residences, meeting-houses, or places of business. There must be some sort of regulation, or the fools, cranks, fanatics, and self-seekers make life unbearable for the mass of sound and decent people. All that can be fairly stipulated is that the regulations shall be as few as possible, and that they shall be strictly impartial, which they certainly are under the London County Council.

"We shall meet in heaven," said Mrs. Weston, of Tooting, to her husband, after drinking poison, which caused her death and necessitated an inquest, resulting in the usual verdict of "temporary insanity." It is generally the cracked people who are so cocksure about these distant foregatherings.

The portrait of Pope Innocent X. by Velasquez is considered by Professor Friedrich Wagner as the best portrait in the world. He describes it as "really fearful in its truthful presentation of the characteristics of the sitter." "The artist has produced," he says, "so astonishing a combination of astuteness, of dignity, and of meanness." This proves that Velasquez was a great reader of men, but it hardly proves that Pope Innocent X. was a first-class representative of a God of infinite wisdom and goodness.

The Oxford Mission to Calcutta, which originated with the Cowley Fathers, began in a small way, but has now a magnificent house of its own in the centre of the student quarter of the city. There is a complete system of education for natives, with special boarding schools, and a college for resident students. But there seems to be a great paucity of converts. "From time to time," says the official record, "at the rate at present of one or two a year, students do come forward to make a public profession of the Christian faith." One or two a year! What a catch! At this rate it will take millions of years to convert the people of India. And long before that Christianity will be forgotten.

That very lively weekly journal, the *Topical Times*, has some editorial remarks in its latest issue on the missionary question. "Why not," it asks, "put an end once and for all to the attempts that are being made to ram Christianity down the throats of Chinamen. It is not good for them, and it is not good for Christianity. After all, what we want is to cultivate friendly relations with China, and to trade with her. But there is no need to include our religion among the articles exported; more particularly as the supply for home consumption seems dangerously short."

As a sort of set-off to the current criticism of Chinese and other foreign missions, some marvellous yarns are now being told by mission supporters. In face of all the facts to the contrary, we are still assured that the Chinese, Mohammedans, Japanese, and Hindoos are yearning for "Christ and him crucified." Here is a specimen yarn from the *Christian Herald*: "A poor old woman in China, who had been converted, but who seemed unwilling to be baptised, was asked why she hesitated. 'Why,' she replied, with tears running down her cheeks, 'you know that Jesus said to his disciples: "Go ye unto all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Now, I am an old woman, nearly seventy years of age, and almost blind. I can tell my husband about Jesus Christ, and I can tell my son, and his wife, when he has one; I am willing to speak to my neighbors, and perhaps I can go to one or two villages; but I can never go to all the world. Now, do you think he will let me call myself a disciple if I can do no better than that?'"

The chances are that this silly story is a pure invention. By the way, there is always one little touch introduced in these tales of so-called conversions. Whether it is a heathen who is being rescued from his blindness or a hardened "infidel" who is about to decide for Christ, we always find that "the tears ran down his cheeks." We don't find people outside these pious anecdotes so readily given to turning on the eye-water, and streams of it too. But, somehow, no story of conversion seems complete without a copious flow of tears either of repentance or of joy.

When Nonconformist ministers from Wales go on a few weeks' or months' tour through the United States, the comment on their visit is that they are going to qualify themselves for the title of "D.D." So says a religious weekly, which in this instance may probably be relied on. The comment, with its veiled sarcasm, might also be applied to Nonconformist ministers who from other parts of the British Isles go a-touring in the States and return full-fledged "D.D.s." Our American cousins are singularly generous in the bestowal of these distinctions. If a little more discrimination were exercised, there would hardly be the crowd of sky-piloting ignoramuses who now go flaunting about as the "Rev. Dr." This or the "Rev. Dr." That.

An American journal says that a certain religious gentleman in Chicago rents a pew for £600, and then sub-lets half of it for a sum a trifle in advance of £600. The rent named seems a little "stiff" for a pew; but, apart from that, the statement is not incredible. We have met this kind of Christian before.

A very nice and gentle curate went to a Yorkshire parish where the parishioners bred horses, and sometimes raced them. He was asked to invite the prayers of the congregation for Lucy Grey. He did so. They prayed three Sundays for "Lucy Grey." On the fourth the clerk told the curate he need not do it any more. "Why?" said the curate; "is she dead?" "No," answered the clerk; "she's won the steeple-chase." The curate became quite a power in the parish.

The Ballet Girls' Mission had a tea meeting in the Congregational Chapel, Leicester Square, the other day. It is specially described in the *Examiner*. After tea the assembled young ladies began the proceedings by singing "Safe in the arms of Jesus." That is well; he is sufficiently far off. Heaven is a long way from the side wings and the stage door. Still, the fair damsels may be advised to fight shy of the Holy Ghost, who once swooped down on a married woman.

Perhaps the Lord was sleeping. A monastery and church at the Polish Lourdes were recently destroyed by fire caused by fireworks discharged in connection with the encampment of 40,000 pilgrims. Nine firemen and five pilgrims were killed, and eighty persons were injured.

The Rev. H. R. Haweis, the outspoken incumbent of St. James's, Marylebone, has been "going it rather strong" on God's Holy Word. In a recent discourse at Margate he said that many people were not happy about the Bible; the clergy were not happy, and children asked awkward questions which mothers did not know how to answer. Intelligent men also asked questions. References were here made to the creation of the world in six days, to Noah's Ark, to the standing still of the sun, to Jonah and the whale. Explanations, Mr. Haweis continued, were attempted by the clergy and others which were not satisfactory. Then was all the Bible fit to be read? Surely not. There were passages in Genesis and Ezekiel wholly unsuitable. And as to the imprecatory Psalms, he declined to read them in his church. Is the Bible everywhere a reliable guide in morals? How about polygamy, slavery, killing those who killed others by mistake? There were, doubtless, in the Old Testament many things not true, not fit to be publicly read, and not good as a guide in morals. It was useless to try to hush up these matters; they had to be faced.

Verbal inspiration, Mr. Haweis went on to say, was surely a myth. How foolish it was to give oneself away to the Bible objector, as we must do if we advocate verbal inspiration. He did not maintain the Bible to be absolutely the Word of God, but he slightly altered the phrase, and he did say the Word of God was in the Bible; and, instead of speaking of an inspired history, he preferred to say the Bible was the history of an inspired people.

That the Jews were an "inspired people" is just as much open to dispute as that their history is inspired, and Mr.

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Haweis disposes of the latter notion almost as effectively as Thomas Paine did over a century ago, and with very much the same kind of arguments. Truly, the world moves.

Believers who lightly discard the notion of a personal Devil will not find much support in the *Methodist Times*. A work has just been published on *How Much is Left of the Old Doctrine?* by Washington Gladden. That writer says the idea of a personal Devil was unknown to the Hebrews of ante-exile days. The belief is of Persian origin, and was borrowed by the Israelites during the exile. "Jesus found this conception in the minds of the people. He did not antagonise it, but *accommodated* his teachings to it."

Upon this absurd evasion the *Methodist Times* observes: "The explanation really means that Jesus accommodated His teachings to what He must have known was a heathen superstition and *a lie*"—a supposition the *M. T.* resolutely declines to accept.

The following curious advertisement is from an East Anglian paper: "Wanted, a steady man to look after a garden and milk a cow who has a good voice and is accustomed to sing in the choir."

Another remarkable advertisement is that which appeared in the *Church Times* the other day. It was from a cleric desiring work. Of his "views" nothing was said; perhaps he was not particular on this point. But he insisted that there should be trout-fishing in the neighborhood, and went so far as to add "brown trout preferred."

Magistrates, like other official persons, are apt to exceed their proper duties. One of their common weaknesses is to air their opinions on various outside questions, as though speaking from the accidental altitude of the bench gave an extra importance to the views they happen to entertain. When will these gentlemen learn that their business is to administer the law as they find it, and that their individual notions as to the changes that should be made in the law by Parliament are of no more authority or value than those of any other citizens? "Stick to your last" is good advice to a cobbler; and, metaphorically, it is good advice to the members of every other trade or profession—including magistrates, and even judges.

Mr. Plowden, the Marlborough-street Police Court magistrate, recently had before him the case of George Carroll, a clerk, residing in Tichborne-row, Edgware-road, who was charged with "conducting a meeting otherwise than in a decent and orderly manner in Hyde Park." He appears to have used some vigorous language against Roman Catholicism, and thus to have caused a "disturbance." But his language was not "indecent," and it was no stronger than the language that may frequently be heard from the lips of Protestant speakers at very "respectable" meetings. Indeed, it was nothing to the language used by the foremost Protestant controversialists two or three hundred years ago. "That damnable cursed holy water" is, perhaps, not an elegant expression; but "damnable" and "cursed" are both good Biblical words, which have been, and still are, frequently in the mouths of priests. But what in the captain is a choleric word is in the soldier flat blasphemy; so the indignant magistrate sentenced the culprit to pay a fine of forty shillings, or to go to prison for fourteen days.

In passing this sentence upon the Hyde Park "disturber" of the Catholic peace, Mr. Plowden was moved by the spirit to deliver a homily on public speaking in the parks. We do not wish to misrepresent him, and we therefore give his remarks *in extenso*, as reported in the next morning's newspapers:—"Many people would like to see all public speaking stopped as liable to become a very great nuisance. Persons are allowed at present by law to make speeches in the parks, but they must do so according to the rules, one of which is that no assembly of persons is permitted unless conducted in a decent and orderly manner. I think you probably owe it to the judgment and forbearance of the police that you escaped last night with a whole skin, and certainly if the people you were addressing and those you were insulting by the offensive caricaturing of the Catholic faith had lost patience with you, and laid hands on you and taken you to a pump, or otherwise assaulted you, I do not think anyone would be found to pity you. People like you, who make addresses of this kind simply to pander to their own vanity, deserve no pity. It is a scandalous thing that any man with a grain of common sense should attack religion in a public park, without knowing the components of his audience, merely to satisfy his own vanity. It is a perfect miracle breaches of the peace are not more frequent. I hope to see the day when all this kind of speaking in the park will become contrary to law."

There is a great deal of nonsense in this gratuitous sermon. It was ridiculous to dwell upon the prisoner's "vanity." Mr. Plowden had never seen him before, and could not possibly know all his motives. It should have occurred to him that, although George Carroll was not a finished orator, or even a discreet speaker, he might nevertheless be animated by a perfectly sincere opposition to the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Whether he "caricatured" the "Catholic Faith"—as the magistrate put it—is a matter of opinion; and, in any case, there is no such crime known at present to the law of England. It should also have occurred to the magistrate that he of all men, by virtue of his office, was one of the last persons to suggest the propriety of putting a controversialist under the pump, or assaulting him in a still more dangerous manner. Finally, we may observe that Mr. Plowden's hope to see all public addresses on religion stopped by the law, while it shows him to be a bigot, is of no particular importance to the public. His individual opinion only counts as he is a member of the general community, with a vote in the election of members of Parliament. When he goes to the ballot box, he goes, not as a magistrate, but as a citizen. And the man who votes immediately before him, or immediately after him, may be one of the very Hyde Park orators whom he finds so obnoxious.

There are squeamish, timid, or bilious persons who want "liberty" without paying its price. When they see or hear anything they dislike they call for the police. They forget that liberty presupposes variety, and that they differ from others precisely as much as others differ from them. Liberty is the policy of live and let live. No doubt it has some disadvantages. If you let all men speak, some men will speak nonsense; and if you let all men have razors, some men will cut throats. But no one has yet discovered any good without a mixture of evil. What we have to go by is the balance of advantage; and the balance is decisive in favor of liberty against compulsion. Liberty is the first condition of accurate thinking and real virtue; it is the sole protection of truth and the only safe guarantee of progress.

Theodore Roosevelt, the Republican candidate for the Vice-Presidency of the United States, has called Thomas Paine "a filthy little Atheist." Thomas Paine was not filthy, he was not little, and he was not an Atheist. With those exceptions, the description is fairly accurate.

Perhaps it is too much to expect consistency in a bishop. Though whether we expect it or not, the fact remains that we don't get it. Take the following glaring example: Recently the Bishop of London declared that he could not give his livings to elderly curates, age being a disqualification. Yet he did not hesitate to make Bishop Barry, who is seventy-four years of age, Bishop-Suffragan for West London. And he has given the rich and important living of St. James's, Piccadilly, to an already beneficed clergyman who is nearly seventy years of age. How is it possible to reconcile the prelatical declaration of policy with the prelatical performance?

A well-known Sydney clergyman has been telling a good story against himself. While preaching recently an extemporaneous sermon, he had occasion to refer to the question of miracles. Some people, he said, had a difficulty in believing some of the miraculous stories of the Bible, as, for example, the speaking of Balaam's ass to his master. Looking solemnly at the congregation, he suddenly clinched his contention with the remark: "Why should not God make an ass to speak—he made me to speak?"

An amusing illustration of the growing demand for athletic clergymen was recently given by a country curate, who received notice to quit because, though unexceptionable in other respects, his vicar declared that "what this parish really needs is a good fast bowler, with a break from the off."

A Freethinker at the front in South Africa, writing to a Newcastle-on-Tyne friend who has sent him this journal, says: "I am quite elated with your kindness in sending me the *Freethinker*, which I am reading with avidity. De Wett burnt a mail of letters, etc., lately, and I presume some of mine are among the ill-fated ones.....Out here at most stations of any consequence are large green tents, where Christianity is preached; and at times they have experience evenings, when all the silly, puerile, and most foolish language of illiterate puppets can be heard. They also have visits of preachers from the Cape. One, a Baptist, used the old stock-in-trade bosh that the infidels had never built a hospital. I could have heckled him, I felt so touched. Another idiot, at the Bloemfontein chapel, addressed the children, and took for his text eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and if thy right hand offend thee cut it off. The blatant jackass! .....The first day [at Paardeberg] we made a charge from the river bed, but the effort was futile, the men falling rapidly, and the balls coming on to us like hail. I was within two yards of the first five men killed and wounded. The first got shot clean through the head, and dropped dead with a Bible in his pocket. He was a religious bloke, poor fellow! One poor fellow was retiring soaked in blood from head to foot. I turned round and remarked to a man behind: 'They say God is good.' In the thickest of the fray I never lost

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any of my Atheism. In fact, I became stronger in my convictions." His last words to his friend are: "Continue sending the *Freethinker*."

The old story of the "Astronomer and the Atheist" has turned up again—this time in the *Sunday Companion*. It professes to relate how an Atheist, admiring an orrery, asked "Who made it?" To which his host, an astronomer, sarcastically replies: "No one made it. It came by chance." This dialogue a little time ago was retailed as having taken place between Colonel Ingersoll and Henry Ward Beecher. A denial was given by members of the Ingersoll family, but, all the same, the paragraph went the round of the press. It is now re-appearing in its original form as a conversation between Athanasius Kirchner and an Atheistic friend unnamed. The story is silly, because there is no analogy between an orrery fashioned out of pre-existing materials and a universe made out of nothing.

A certain minister, during his discourse one Sabbath morning, said: "In each blade of grass there is a sermon." The following day little Gordon discovered the minister pushing a lawn-mower about his garden, and ran home to say: "Oh, mother! I saw our pastor mowing his sermons this morning."

The Lord rather alarmed his worshippers in Bangor Cathedral the other Sunday afternoon. During the service the sacristan, hearing a disturbance towards the west end of the cathedral, went down the aisle, and found that the tiled floor was opening and gaping all around. He hurried to the canon in residence, who was preaching, and whispered into his ear the terrible words, "Earthquake, sir!" The service was immediately brought to a conclusion. The phenomenon is supposed to have been produced by the recent tremendously heavy rainfall, combined with the great heat.

That is the natural explanation. As for the Lord, he seems to have been quite content to let his devotees undergo a little fright. And, perhaps for the fun of the thing, didn't mind the prayer and praise being abruptly terminated.

Many are the tales told of local preachers. On one occasion an exhorter, belonging to Gateshead Fell, was preaching after a prayer-meeting; and, when praying for a penitent, he shouted as loud as he could: "O, Lord! if thoo winnet save this sinner, I'll split the form."

Surely the Deity is to be pitied. He is now to be assailed with what is called "an endless chain of prayer" against the re-election of President McKinley. The Women's Christian Temperance Union have arranged the plan, which works in this way: The President makes the first prayer. She writes to two women, asking each of them to offer prayers, and to write to two others to do so. The praying is to continue until the election day, and the promoters of the chain expect that before then half the women in the States will have petitioned Heaven to bring about McKinley's defeat. Poor God!

A contemporary, discussing the next Church Congress after Newcastle, says: "Brighton is not popularly supposed to be fervently attached to religious exercises." "No!" says the *Topical Times*; "we have never noticed Brighton absolutely oozing spirituality ourselves, now we come to think of it."

The author of *The Dawn of Revelation*—which book, by the way, would be better named *The Eclipse of Revelation*—does not seem disposed to sit down meekly under the censure of the "Presiding Member of the Mothers' Union." He defends himself quite manfully against her strictures. He says: "If the 'Presiding Member' were aware how the Old Testament has been of late neglected in the teaching of Christian families, and perfunctorily taught in schools by those who were aware of the existence of modern controversies about it, but who had neither time nor books to enable them to work out the question for themselves, she might have more sympathy with an attempt to restore it to its proper place in education."

This is very well, except as regards the use of the word "restore." What he really means is "an attempt to *reduce* it to its proper place in education." To restore means to return, to reinstate; but that, as applied by him to the position of the Old Testament, is absurd. His view of the book has never been generally held in history by any but much-maligned "infidels"—to whom, by the way, he is indebted for most of his incredulity.

"A Member of the Mothers' Union" also writes to the *Church Times*. She laments that there is only too much truth in the assertion that "the English are no longer a church-going people." She remarks that "Family prayer—grace before and after meat—the observance of Sunday, have passed away in a vast number of homes, and even among more religious people church-going is not unfrequently reduced to an early service on Sunday morning, while the rest of the day is given to pleasure and society. It is said that only one per cent. of the working men in East London go to any place of worship whatsoever."

"Hubert" contributes to the *Sunday Chronicle* an interesting sketch of Nietzsche and his philosophy. He quotes the following observation by Nietzsche on moral Agnostics like George Eliot: "They have got rid of the Christian God, and now think themselves obliged to cling firmer than ever to Christian morality. Having given up their religion, they feel that they must make up for it with a double dose of respectability."

Upon this "Hubert" observes: "I rather fancy that anyone who has the acquaintance of a certain type of Freethinker will recognise the truth of this biting gibe."

One must certainly dissent from Nietzsche's suggestion that Freethinkers cling to "Christian morality." That is the very thing that Freethinkers are mostly impelled to assail. As to the "double dose of respectability," a great deal, of course, depends on what is meant by "respectability." In the true meaning of the term, disassociated from any notion of mere conventional pretence and cant or smug conceit, respectability is something very much to be aimed at. And we take it, therefore, to be a compliment and not a gibe when Freethinkers, "of a certain type," are credited with having absorbed a double dose.

The tender mercies of the righteous are cruel. A pious hound named Frederick Ellen has been charged at Westminster with ill-treating his daughter aged eight. On the night of June 19 this sanctimonious brute kept the child up till one o'clock to learn a Bible lesson he had set her. She grew tired and stupid, could not learn the texts, and was then beaten by defendant with a strap for a considerable time.

The savage wretch, of course, whined like a cur when brought before the magistrate by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. He pleaded that he had been in one situation a long time. We hope his employers will kick him off their premises. Then he said he was practically a total abstainer—as if that had anything to do with it. The stipendiary merely bound him over in his own recognisances. He ought to have been sent to gaol for a month, or, better still, he should have been flogged for an hour with his own strap.

Righteous Rhyl! A tobacconist there was last week fined £3 12s. for selling tobacco on Sunday. Two visitors were fined 2s. 6d. each for aiding and abetting. This is one of the dangers of visiting that howling wilderness of arid sand, with its meagre glimpse of sea somewhere on the horizon. The place deserves to be reduced to bankruptcy.

There was a large gathering of the Y.M.C.A. at Exeter Hall on Sunday afternoon, and a Mr. Coldicott, who addressed them, said that "Insincerity was one of the great crimes of the times." Yes, and it is the peculiar "crime" of religious circles.

This Mr. Coldicott showed that, in one respect, there was no hypocrisy about himself. He boldly enunciated the orthodox old Christian doctrine of exclusive salvation. He said that he had found, especially in Buddhist countries, many who were "moral, philanthropic, patriotic, kind, and generous." But these good people were all "unsaved" because they did not "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." This is the doctrine of the Thirty-nine Articles. What is more, it is the doctrine of the New Testament. A good life does not take a man a single step on the road to heaven. That place is reserved for true believers. Many an honest unbeliever is roasting in hell, and many a believing scoundrel plays a harp in heaven.

Archdeacon Colley, of Natal, is at present in London, and on Sunday last he preached at St. Peter's, Kensington. In the course of his sermon he asked, "Was there not such a thing as a religion of common sense?" And his answer was, "Yea, verily." Well, perhaps there is such a religion; but, if so, it must be very much like the religion of that famous writer, Lord Shaftesbury. Being asked of what religion he was, he replied: "The religion of every wise man." And being asked what that was, he replied: "No wise man tells."

As the word "religion" is used by Archdeacon Colley, and his brethren of the Black Army, there cannot possibly be a religion of common sense. As easily might there be a round square, or a bitter sweet. The very terms contradict each other. All supernatural religion is based upon "faith," and that is the negation of common sense. The priests of every religion, where they dare to say so, teach that the man who reasons is lost. In other words, as old Hobbes pointedly put it, religion is like a pill; if you chew it you will never swallow it.

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Special.

The FREETHINKER has been for several months, and is still, published at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed. Readers are warned against sending orders to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. Those premises have for some time been definitively closed, and Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, who cannot be answerable for anything sent to him.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 16 and 23, London; 30, Glasgow.
October 7, Manchester; 21, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—September 9, 16, and 23, Camberwell; 30, Athenæum Hall; October 7, Athenæum Hall; 9 and 10, debate at Bolton; 14 (Sunday), Bolton; 21, Birmingham. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

R. CHAPMAN.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

J. WALKER.—The American complete edition of Colonel Ingersoll's lectures, addresses, essays, articles, etc., published by his family, is to be in twelve volumes, and to cost £5. It has not yet reached England. There has been a delay in consequence of the inclusion of extra matter.

W. CAMPBELL.—Duly to hand. We are obliged.

A. R. FRENCH.—You will find a mass of valuable information on the subject in the late J. M. Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past*, which you can order from our publishing office. The price is 2s., with 2d. postage.

MIMNERMUS writes:—"By all means have the *Freethinker* folded. The newsagents are awfully careless. By the way, I had a fine job to get the paper here [Brighton]. I called at eight different shops before I got a copy. The local 'saints' ought to see to this."

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

WALTER DAVIDSON.—Duly to hand. Much obliged. "My experience," you say, "of Spiritualism is that investigation is denied. I could get into a *séance* now and then, but anything like a test was refused, which rendered all I saw useless as a proof of anything." We believe your experience is not uncommon. We have frequently offered to find some competent Atheist to sit on a committee of investigation, but our suggestion has never fascinated the Spiritualists. By the way, and with all due respect to them, it is difficult to see what special right they have to the name they bear. They ought to call themselves *Spiritists*. That is honest and distinctive.

W. COX (Liverpool).—Glad to hear you opened with a good meeting in your hall on Sunday evening.

F. J. GOULD.—Your article on "A Talk About Heaven" arrives too late for this week's issue. It will appear in our next, and your admirers, who are many, will have the pleasure of looking forward to it.

E. W. SCOTT.—Pleased to know you appreciate our articles on Shakespeare. We have begun the writing of our projected volume. We note your opinion that Mr. Cross's portrait of Mr. Foote, which is being sold for the benefit of the Twentieth Century Fund, is most excellent. Glad to hear that you will contribute to "Shilling Week." Every Freethinker should do likewise.

W. B. THOMPSON.—Sorry to hear the attendance was not as numerous as it should have been at your opening meeting at New Brompton, but pleased to hear that Mr. Watts gave you such an excellent and highly-appreciated lecture. "Deeds, not Words" is a good motto, especially if the deeds have a financial color about them.

T. W. R. TURNER.—In our next.

A. B. MOSS.—You must indeed have had a rush to get to West Ham after your lecture at Station-road, where we are gratified to hear you had such a good meeting.

F. H. WATTS.—Thanks for cuttings.

GLASWEGIAN.—Yes, it is amusing to read that the Catholics resent the burning of two dead bodies, formerly tenanted by souls of their profession, but finally stinking and dangerous from the plague. Never mind the danger to the living. The Catholic Church is against cremation, because it knows that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is bound up with the practice of burial.

G. B. H. MCCLUSKEY (Devonport), sending a donation to the Twentieth Century Fund, says: "I think the Fund ought to reach at least £1,500, if every Freethinker had a clear conception of his duty, and did it."

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Acknowledgment in another column. Thanks for remittance with list.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Fresh acknowledgments:—Captain Taylor, £1; G. B. H. McCluskey, £1; James Hooper, 5s.; Jane Hooper, 5s.; Well-wisher, 10s. 6d.; W. Smithyman, £1; J. Partridge (promise redeemed), 10s. 6d.

G. J. WARREN.—Thanks for the marked copy of *Justice*. It is pleasant to see that our Socialist contemporary is alive to the fact that "secular education" must be fought for, and that "It is hopeless to look for any very material progress in education while it is dominated by clerics."

OLD READER.—A characteristic answer, and just what we expected. It is useless to argue against a malignant prejudice. Silence is the best policy. We suspect we gave more space to the matter than it deserved.

A. BUTLER.—Thanks for the extract. Mrs. Besant's new recipe for India—to send out a member of the Royal Family as a permanent ruler—is of a piece with all her "philosophy" since she abandoned Secularism. The red-hot Republican and rampant Materialist has gone far since she fell under the Blavatsky influence, as we predicted she would when she took her first step on the road. A good many Freethinkers thought us "severe" then. But we knew the road, and they didn't.

ENQUIRER.—There are just a few copies of Dillon's *Sceptics of the Old Testament* still in stock. The book is really an admirable one. The price is 3s. 6d. Order of the Freethought Publishing Company, and add 3d. for postage.

H. SHEPPARD, J. WARNER, W. WAYMARK, J. PLATT, M. SAMUELS, and J. ISAAC.—Thanks for copies of the paper sent.

RECEIVED.—Margate Gazette—Grays Gazette—Crescent—Daily News—Justice—Huddersfield Examiner—Ethical World—Blue Grass Blade—Literary Guide—Manchester Daily Dispatch—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Public Opinion—Liberator—Lucifer—Truthseeker (New York)—Bradford Telegraph—Torch of Reason—Fria Ord—Secular Thought—Two Worlds—Boston Investigator—Free Society—Glasgow Daily Record.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

WE regret to state that the Athenæum Hall will not be opened for Sunday evening lectures until September 16. The proprietor has delayed the necessary cleaning and repairs, and it is impossible to resume the meetings until these are completed, which he promises they will be by the date mentioned.

The last of the Freethought Demonstrations for the present was held at West Ham on Sunday afternoon. Mr. Wilson's brake served as a platform again, and a good crowd assembled around it. Mr. A. B. Moss acted as chairman, and led off with a capital speech, which was much appreciated. Mr. C. Cohen followed with an excellent address, full of good points. Mr. Watts was not present, being engaged elsewhere; but Mr. Foote wound up the proceedings with a speech that was freely punctuated with laughter and applause; Miss Vance meanwhile looking after the collection. Altogether it was a highly successful gathering.

August was a most disgraceful month in the matter of weather, but it ended very fairly. The last day was fine and warm, and we looked forward to a good day on September 1 for the N. S. S. Annual Children's Excursion. Unfortunately, the climate of this dear island kept up its fickle character, and the day opened with a steady, nasty rain, that looked as though it would last till the same date in 1901. However, it desisted somewhat before eleven o'clock, and the children whose parents had allowed them to dare the weather—about a half of those who would have come under other conditions—were driven off in brakes to Underhill Farm, High Barnet. Had the sun been shining, it would have been a very enjoyable drive, for the longest way was taken, as arranged, and it was through some beautiful country, adorned with lush grass and noble trees. Still, the youngsters were merry enough, and the rain mercifully held off most of the time. When they stopped on the road for their first refreshment they disposed of piles of buns and gallons of gingerbeer. Arriving at Underhill Farm, they first repaired to a tent fixed up for them, and were presented with packets of confection. Then they broke loose into a big field, where they

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had donkey and pony rides, swings and races. Some of the bigger boys played football. The grass was wet, but the sky kept clearing, until at last the sun came out and threw a welcome cheerfulness upon the scene. At five o'clock they sat down to a good tea, and after more fun in the field they were packed into the brakes again and driven home by another and shorter route. All the way back they sang songs, and were as jolly as jolly could be; and, in spite of all disadvantages, they said they had had a "lovely" time.

The elders who were with the party included Mr. and Mrs. Foote, Mr. Watts, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Quay, and Mr. Leat, who mounted a pony in clown's costume, and afforded the youngsters a good deal of merriment. Mr. Leat is a handy man for these occasions; indeed, he is so for *all* occasions. Miss Lovell played the attentive nurse to an indisposed little girl, who was evidently suffering from a cold; and Miss Vance was, as usual, up to eyes in all sorts of work. She must be glad, in one sense, that the excursion is over.

This Children's Excursion is not yet paid for—that is to say, its expenses are not covered by subscriptions. The total cost is about £15. Roughly, a half of that amount has been subscribed. The other half ought to be in the Secretary's (Miss Vance's) hands immediately.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured in the Secular Hall, New Brompton, to an exceedingly attentive audience. We are pleased to hear that Mr. Watts was in "excellent form," and that his lecture was "enthusiastically received." This evening, Sunday, September 9, Mr. Watts lectures in the North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road, under the auspices of the Camberwell Branch of the N.S.S.

The Birmingham Branch issues an appeal for Funds, which we hope will meet with a liberal response. Mr. Percy Ward's engagement with the Branch terminates at the end of September, and it is desired to secure a continuance of his services, but this cannot be done without further financial support. Mr. Ward is Lecturer and Organiser to the Branch. He has delivered a number of open-air lectures during the summer, and a considerable quantity of Freethought literature has been distributed at the meetings. He has also delivered indoor lectures at the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms. Last, but perhaps not least, the Branch has invited him to stand as a "secular education" candidate at the Birmingham School Board elections in November, and he has consented to become a candidate. This is a bold, but necessary, challenge to both the great parties, and particularly to the so-called Liberals, who have actually expanded their "religious education" program in order to take the wind out of the sails of the Church party. We sincerely hope that Mr. Ward will win a seat. That he will make a good fight is beyond question. But fighting is thankless work without resources, and we trust the Branch's appeal will bring these into its exchequer. Donations can be sent to Mr. J. Partridge, hon. secretary, 65 Cato-street; or to Mr. W. T. Pitt, hon. treasurer, 60 Kenyon-street.

London newsagents are complaining that they cannot get the wholesale agents to supply them with a proper number of copies of the *Freethinker*, or to take back their changes. This is simply pure "cussedness," for the *Freethinker* has always been supplied on sale or return. Perhaps the newsagents who experience this difficulty will kindly send particulars direct to the Freethought Publishing Company. If they do, they shall be waited upon, and some arrangement made for supplying them sufficiently.

The important Conference on Secular Education and the approaching London School Board elections, convened by the Executive of the National Secular Society, will take place on Tuesday evening (Sept. 11) at 8 o'clock in the large hall of the Club and Institute Union. The following organisations have appointed delegates to this Conference:—The Metropolitan Radical Federation, the National Secular Society, Edmonton Branch N.S.S., East London Branch N.S.S., North Camberwell Radical Club, East London Ethical Society, Kentish Town Branch S.D.F., Marylebone Branch S.D.F., Stoke Newington Branch S.D.F., New Lansdowne Liberal and Radical Club, South London Ethical Society. Other appointments have probably been made, or will be made, but we can only include those to hand on Tuesday, September 4. Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, Moss, Heaford, Shore, and Warren will attend on Tuesday evening.

Secular Thought (Toronto) reproduces Mr. Foote's article on "Chinese Horrors." We are glad to receive our excellent Canadian contemporary again. It has been reaching us fitfully of late.

We beg once more to call attention to the Application Form for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, which will be found on the last page of this week's *Freethinker*. In the midst of other enterprises, this one should not be forgotten. The fate of our literary propaganda in the immediate future is bound up with it. Every Freethinker who can afford to invest something in this Company, even if it be only the amount of a single share, is under a moral obligation to do so. We are not mincing matters, and we do not intend to. We appeal straight to the sense of duty to the cause in the hearts of Freethinkers.

Bible English.

For many years I have been under the second-hand impression that, brutal, disgusting, and silly as are many of the incidents and teachings translated of the Jew Book, yet, these drawbacks notwithstanding, its English was impeccable, and that our ablest writers in prose have found the example for their best style in the English translation of that book, or of those books. Now, I am no stylist myself, although I admire concise, terse, vivid, and chromatic writing whenever I meet with it; and to-night it occurred to me to take down my Polyglot Bible, and sample its renowned prose, which, up to now, I have weakly accepted as being what so many have claimed for it—a perfect pattern of English as she should be written. My copy opened haphazard at Deuteronomy cxvii., and verse 5 runs therein as follows: "Then shalt thou bring forth that man or *that woman which have committed that wicked thing* unto thy gates, *even that man and that woman*, and shall stone them *with stones* till they die."

Will you be surprised at my astonishment? I read no further then, but took up my "pupil pen," and began this screed. The verse quoted contains thirty-four words; of these thirty-four words, fourteen—those printed in italics—are mere redundances and repetitions. As for stoning a woman to death, how *could* that be done without stones? Mark Twain probably would suggest stoning to death with feathers as a more humane method of murdering heretics; but he is a mere wag, and didn't learn his English from a translation. To me the verse reads more like an attorney's business-English than that of a scholar. Verses 9, 10, and 11 read: "And thou shalt come unto the priests, *the Levites*, and unto the Judge *that shall be in those days*, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment. And thou shalt do according to the sentence *which they of that place which the Lord shall choose shall show thee;* and thou shalt *observe to do* according to all that they inform thee; *according to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee thou shalt do;* thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show thee to the right hand nor to the left." English, quotha! Padding, legal padding; mere horsehair, mere chair stuffing! One hundred and nine words—if I count not miss, for I am not strong in figures, which are even more delusive than facts—and of these five score and nine words *not less* than forty-eight are mere repetitive surplusage and meaningless addenda!

O ye gods, Hebrew and heathen, save us from more of this flood of tautologic slush!

I can no farther go on hunting after English in the book of our idolatry. Errors upon error's head accumulate! Why, my solicitor's charwoman can express herself in an English more compact than the English of the drivellers that did for Deuteronomy. Poor penny-a-liner writers of tortuous Telegraphese, go ye to Deuteronomy and learn your long-drawn-out trade: how to convey the smallest quantity of unimportant information in the greatest quantity of windy words; this the translators will teach you, and in this, our Holy Book, shall be examples for you wherefrom ye shall learn to fill your columns with verbal bran-mash, to save your heads from the trouble of providing ideas, and to make one small fact go as far as fifty big ones did before!

Really, sirs and madames, when I started this screed I had a little English at the tip of my pen; but now, after four verses of holy writ, I am corrupted, my prose is demoralised, a long-cherished—on faith of others—illusion has gone, like unto a burst bubble; and, after the Deuteronomical fashion, seeing how wickedly I have done this thing of libelling our glorious English language by ignorantly referring to the translation of the Bible as its famous exemplar, I beg ye to hale me before some good judge of prosody "that shall be in these days, and ask him to show the sentence of judgment, and thou shalt do unto me according to the sentence which he of that place, which the Lord-knows-who shall choose, shall show thee, and shall observe to do according to all that he informs ye; according to the sentence of the laws of prose which he shall teach ye, and according to the judgment which he shall tell ye ye shall do; ye shall not decline from the sentence which he shall show ye to the right hand nor to the left." And so that he, that shall be a good prosodist in these days, sentence me not to learn any more English from the translation of ancient and unknown Asiatic authors, humbly will I bow to his decree. For 'twere better freely to read the good English of James Thomson's *Speedy Extinction of Evil and Misery*, or his *Fair of Saint Sylvester*, in durance vile, than to be compelled to read English, as she is written in Deuteronomy, on the other side the wall. Amen.

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Free Inquiry.

IT has been well said: "Let not the freedom of inquiry be shackled. If it multiplies contentions among the wise and virtuous, it exercises the charity of those who contend. If it shackles for a time the belief that is rested only upon prejudice, it finally settles it upon the broader and more solid basis of conviction." This is precisely the Secularist's position, inasmuch as he contends that free inquiry is not only a right all should possess, but that it is an indispensable essential in the pursuit of truth. As uniformity of opinion upon speculative questions is not always practicable nor desirable, the utmost liberty of investigation should be afforded to each individual, whose thoughts and expressions of their views should have the fullest range. We believe with John Stuart Mill that "the peculiar evil of silencing an expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation, those who dissent from the opinion still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of changing error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error."

Professed Christians are very fond of quoting the words of St. Paul—"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good"—for the purpose of showing that their faith favors free inquiry. But this is one of the many mistakes which Christian advocates are constantly committing. The method which they usually adopt in their propaganda certainly does not accord with the injunction to "prove all things." A far more appropriate phrase for them to adopt, judging from their treatment of opponents, would be: "Believe, and take for granted, what we say unto you." Those who have impartially read the history of the Church need not be informed that its policy has always been to discourage the proving of all things which were opposed to their own opinions. The most consistent followers of St. Paul's advice have been condemned by the Church as heretics; and the result of their inquiry has been persecution and death. There is a marked difference between the Christian interpretation of St. Paul's injunction and that which is supplied by the logical method. The Christians practically say: "Carry on your examination by all means; but it must be within the limits we think allowable." Logic, on the contrary, says the reasonable meaning of the injunction is, that the only limit of the examination of any question is the boundary of human capacity. Of course, the reason why the Church has restricted free inquiry is obvious. To allow the examination of the claims of Christianity by untrammelled thought, in the light of cultivated reason, would doubtless lead to serious "religious difficulties." For it is well known that the exercise of human reason tends to impel an honest inquirer to

> Seize on truth where'er 'tis found,
> On Christian or on *other* ground.

But supposing we assume that St. Paul's injunction really means that we should prove all things, including Christian claims, then we have to face the important question, What will be our fate if we fail to "hold fast" to that which Christianity has pronounced to be *the* good that ought to be sought after? It must not be ignored that Christianity threatens severe punishment to those who do not accept what it deems the truth. Here we have an illustration of what frequently occurs in the teachings of the New Testament. When it propounds a useful precept it often accompanies it with that which mars its utility. It is quite right that we should, so far as it is in our power, prove the truth, or otherwise, of whatever is presented to us for our acceptance. But it is only just that every inquirer should be permitted to "hold fast" to that which his own reason and judgment tell him is true. There is no stimulant given to free inquiry in the words ascribed to Christ: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.....if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." There is no incentive afforded to impartial investigation in the gloomy words: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Once establish among mankind the erroneous notion that truth is confined to one particular channel, and that those who do not go in that direction are to be cast forth as a "withered branch," then the impossibility of unfettered thought should immediately be apparent. The fact is being more and more recognised by intelligent thinkers that opinion is the result of organisation and evidence. And instead of inflicting punishment for the imperfections of the one, or for the limitation of the other, the Secularist policy is to encourage the widest and most diversified thoughts, seeking to correct by unfettered inquiry and honest criticism those which are erroneous.

If we take literally the injunction to "prove all things," and apply it to the evidence necessary to establish the truth of Christianity, what does the impartial inquirer discover? Apart from the ethical features of Christianity, which furnish no evidence of the validity of its claims, what does it present to our view? Very little else than dreams and visions that violate rational conceptions of the methods of nature. We are asked to accept as "proofs" stories that stagger reason and defy common sense. Laws of logic and rules of evidence demand the production of facts that would carry conviction to the mind. But this is what the "proofs," offered on behalf of Christianity, do not provide. Instead of doing this, the New Testament is full of narrations that mock our reasoning faculties. Glaring as the evidential defects are, the excuses made for them are as fallacious as they are impertinent. We are told, for instance, that such stories might convince us if we did not refuse to be convinced. It is supposed that we can *will* a thing to be untrue. That is, it is held that those extraordinary tales in the New Testament appear to be erroneous because we are determined not to be convinced that they are true. Wilful unbelief is recklessly urged against us. But really such charges only reveal the ignorance and bigotry of those who make them. Nothing ought to be plainer to the candid mind than the fact that it is the insufficiency of evidence that is the cause of non-credence. No evidence is sufficient for its legitimate purpose unless it produces conviction. As Volney puts it: "To believe without evidence and demonstration is an act of ignorance and folly."

It may be useful to point out the confusion of thought evinced by certain Christian advocates in their endeavors to prove that the Church is in favor of free inquiry. They use glowing terms and brilliant rhetoric, with a view of persuading their followers that their faith is on the side of freedom of thought. But persuasion is not conviction, and declamation is not demonstration. By some it is contended that Christianity is a religion of reason, and therefore can stand its test. Is this so? Let us see. Reason is in accord with the laws of nature, while the alleged proofs of Christianity are composed of words and actions contrary to those laws. Thus supposed facts that are opposed to natural law are adduced to substantiate theories and doctrines that are contrary to reason. The reader must not confound reason, when seeking to discover truth, with the state of mind resulting from having been taught to believe in a particular faith. The orthodox Christian, as a rule, accepts his belief without doubt or examination, while the student of reason deems it a duty to examine the credentials of a faith before accepting it as true. With Secularists reason is the arbiter between the claims of truth and error. It is the true light and guide of man; upon it Secularists rest their beliefs, and not upon mere faith and assertion. Doubt and fearless investigation are absolutely necessary to free inquiry, and to these the Church has been, and in many instances still is, a determined foe.

CHARLES WATTS.

An amusing story is told of the great Norman McLeod and McGregor of the Tron. They were being rowed across a Highland loch by two stalwart Highlanders. Seeing the water very rough with a strong head wind, Archie remarked to Malcolm: "I'm afraid we are going to be swamped; as we have two ministers on board we might ask them to put up a prayer." To which Malcolm promptly replied: "The wee fellow may pray away as long as he likes, but the big one will have to take an oar."

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An Apostle of Humanism.

"Rabelais laughing in his easy chair."—POPE.
"I class Rabelais with the great creative minds of the world—Shakespeare, Dante, Cervantes."—COLERIDGE.

THE popular idea of Rabelais coincides with Pope's famous line. He is pictured as one who laughs and mocks at all things—a hog for appetite, a monkey for tricks. He has been described as a great moral teacher, a grossly obscene writer, a reckless buffoon, a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Freethinker. To paint him as a moral teacher alone is to ignore the innate drollery of his character. To set him up as a mere mountebank is to forget the stern reality which underlies his writings. Other unconscious ironists would turn the first of French humorists into a trumpery ecclesiastical historian. To treat Rabelais as destitute of all serious purpose in art or life is even a greater error. Whatever Rabelais may have been, he was not a trifler. He had seen ecclesiastical life from the inside, and he hated priests with every drop of his blood. He studied Greek when it was a hated and forbidden language. He was an enthusiastic disciple of the new learning in an age when scholars carried their lives in their hands. His noble zeal for intellectual freedom, untrammelled by priestcraft, entitles him to rank with Erasmus and Von Hutten as an apostle of humanism.

François Rabelais was of middle-class parentage. He was born in 1483, near the lovely little city of Chinon, on the Vienne, where Henry II. cursed his sons, and died. He always regarded Touraine, its cities, rivers, and vineyards, with affectionate admiration. The fact of his father having been an innkeeper was used as a weapon against him in literary controversy. His father, unfortunately, wished to make him a priest. Accordingly, little François was sent, at nine years of age, to the Benedictine monks of Scully, so young that the white shirt was put over the child's frock. Later, Rabelais was removed to the Franciscan Monastery of Fontenoy le Comte. The Franciscan vows seem to have included ignorance as well as celibacy and poverty. He remained there for fifteen years, taking priest's orders in 1511, at the age of twenty-eight. It is to this long period spent among the ignorant, bigoted, narrow sons of the great lying Catholic Church that we owe his undying hatred of priestcraft. It breaks out in every page of his writings—now passionately, now sorrowfully, with a cry of rage, a sob of pain, or a laugh of scorn. He hated the "monk birds" more bitterly than even Erasmus, for his nature was stronger.

At the age of forty he came into the world a free man—free, that is, to follow his studies—burning with a pathetic enthusiasm for the new learning. He threw aside the hated monastic garb, and became secretary to the Bishop of Maillezais. About 1530 he went to the University of Montpelier, with the intention of getting a medical degree. Remark that at this time, when Rabelais is following the lectures, he is already within sight of his fiftieth year. Two years later he went to Lyons, where he held an appointment as physician to the hospital. His friend, Etienne Dolet, was already established as a printer in the place. Rabelais's connection with the first reformers of France is certain; the extent difficult to determine. Rabelais had no desire for the martyr's crown. He never contemplated following Calvin into exile, or Berquin to the stake. His sympathies were antagonistic to all dogmas. He held Luther and Calvin in almost as much abhorrence as the priests. The society of Des Perriers, Dolet, and the Lyonnais Freethinkers was more congenial to his habits of thought. Moreover, he had excellent reasons for knowing the power of the great lying Church and the pious malignity of her hired assassins.

Heretics were then handed over to the secular arm to be burnt for the good of their souls and the greater glory of God, and François Rabelais did not intend, if he could help it, to be butchered to make a Roman holiday. When he was denounced as a heretic, he challenged his enemies to produce a heretical proposition from his writings. They were unequal to the task; but, none the less, the heresy was there. Rabelais's caution was necessary if he wished to live. Three at least of his contemporaries suffered for heresy. Dolet was burnt, Des Perriers was driven to suicide, Marot was a half-starved wanderer in Piedmont. Rabelais may be excused for not wishing to be "saved by fire." His sense of humor always prevented him from becoming a fanatic.

It has been said that Rabelais despised women. He did not write till an age when the passion of youth had consumed itself to ashes. Passion was killed in Rabelais by that hateful system of monkery which has filled Christendom with unspeakable horrors. Poor Rabelais! A whole half of humanity absent from his mind. Love, the central fire of the universe, the source of all human joys and sympathies, the bond of society, appears, in the accursed monastic system in which he was trained, as corruption and depravity. The damnable discipline surrounded Rabelais from the time he wore a child's frock till he was a man of forty, and the best side of his nature was strangled. He never loved, never even thought of loving. He had no more respect for women than a eunuch in an eastern seraglio. Nay more, there had even been crushed out of him that love for his mother which characterises every Frenchman worthy of the name. Alone among French writers he has no filial piety. As the old galley-slave may be known by the dragging foot, on which was once the fetter, so when the unlovely years have eaten away manhood, imprisoned with its blind instincts and objectless passions, the ex-monk is known by his sexless mind. Thrice, poor Rabelais! The monkish devils spoiled his life. The robe he wore was to him like a bodily deformity, corrupting his mind, narrowing his views. Originally, his nature must have been lofty and beautiful—witness those exquisite chapters in which he describes the monks of Thelema, whose motto was "Liberty." His death was unexpected. We may picture the rage of the Christians when their old enemy, now almost within their pious clutches, slipped quietly out of their eager hands. The great lying Catholic Church never forgets, and priests never forgive. It was well for the old man that his life was not prolonged. Rabelais went further than contempt for the trappings of Christianity. He rejected it altogether. There cannot be the slightest doubt that Rabelais was a Freethinker. He hoped to cure the evil of religion by spreading knowledge, by bringing priestcraft into contempt, by widening the boundaries of thought. He *knew* as much as any man of his time. He was acquainted with the book of the world, and not merely with the world of books. He studied science and practised medicine. He knew practically everything there was to be known. His life was spent in the pursuit of knowledge. Liberty was Rabelais's sovereign specific for the ills of his time. He found his contemporaries tied and bound with chains of their own manufacture. His purpose was to break their fetters and set them free.

MIMNERMUS.

Advice to Agnostics.

KEEP CHILDREN OUT OF CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Should parents who are Infidels, Unbelievers, or Atheists send their children to Sunday-schools and churches to give them the benefit of Christian education?

PARENTS who do not believe the Bible to be an inspired book should not teach their children that it is. They should be absolutely honest. Hypocrisy is not a virtue, and, as a rule, lies are less valuable than facts.

An unbeliever should not allow the mind of his child to be deformed, stunted, and shrivelled by superstition. He should not allow the child's imagination to be polluted. Nothing is more outrageous than to take advantage of the helplessness of childhood to sow in the brain the seeds of falsehood, to imprison the soul in the dungeon of fear, to teach dimpled infancy the infamous dogma of eternal pain—filling life with the glow and glare of hell.

No unbeliever should allow his child to be tortured in the orthodox inquisitions. He should defend the mind from attack as he would the body. He should recognise the rights of the soul. In the orthodox Sunday-schools children are taught that it is a duty to believe, that evidence is not essential, that faith is independent of facts, and that religion is superior to reason. They are taught not to use their natural sense, not to tell what

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they really think, not to entertain a doubt, not to ask wicked questions, but to accept and believe what their teachers say. In this way the minds of the children are invaded, corrupted, and conquered. Would an educated man send his child to a school in which Newton's statement in regard to the attraction of gravitation was denied, in which the law of falling bodies, as given by Galileo, was ridiculed, Kepler's three laws declared to be idiotic, and the rotary motion of the earth held to be utterly absurd?

Why, then, should an intelligent man allow his child to be taught the geology and astronomy of the Bible? Children should be taught to seek for the truth—to be honest, kind, generous, merciful, and just. They should be taught to love liberty and to live to the ideal.

Why, then, should an unbeliever—an infidel—send his child to an orthodox Sunday-school, where he is taught that he has no right to seek for the truth, no right to be mentally honest, and that he will be damned for an honest doubt; where he is taught that God was ferocious, revengeful, heartless as a wild beast; that he drowned millions of his children; that he ordered wars of extermination, and told his soldiers to kill grey-haired and trembling age, mothers and children, and to assassinate with the sword of war the babes unborn?

Why should an unbeliever in the Bible send his child to an orthodox Sunday-school, where he is taught that God was in favor of slavery, and told the Jews to buy of the heathen, and that they should be their bondmen and bondwomen for ever—when he is taught that God upheld polygamy and the degradation of women?

Why should an "unbeliever," who believes in the uniformity of nature—in the unbroken and unbreakable chain of cause and effect—allow his child to be taught that miracles have been performed; that men have gone bodily to heaven; that millions have been miraculously fed with manna and quails; that fire has refused to burn the clothes and flesh of men; that iron has been made to float; that the earth and moon have been stopped, and that the earth has not only been stopped, but made to turn the other way; that devils inhabit the bodies of men and women; that diseases have been cured with words, and that the dead, with a touch, have been made to live again?

The thoughtful man knows that there is not the slightest evidence that these miracles ever were performed. Why should he allow his children to be stuffed with these foolish and impossible falsehoods? Why should he give his lambs to the care and keeping of the wolves and hyenas of superstition?

Children should be taught only what somebody knows. Guesses should not be palmed off on them as demonstrated facts. If a Christian lived in Constantinople, he would not send his children to the mosque to be taught that Mohammed was a prophet of God, and that the Koran is an inspired book. Why? Because he does not believe in Mohammed or the Koran? That is reason enough. So an Agnostic, living in New York, should not allow his children to be taught that the Bible is an inspired book. I use the word "Agnostic" because I prefer it to the word "Atheist." As a matter of fact, no one knows that God exists, and no one knows that God does not exist. To my mind, there is no evidence that God exists—that this world is governed by a being of infinite goodness, wisdom, and power—but I do not pretend to know. What I do insist upon is that children should not be poisoned, should not be taken advantage of; that they should be treated fairly, honestly; that they should be allowed to develop from the inside instead of being crammed from the outside; that they should be taught to reason, not to believe; to think, to investigate, and to use their senses, their minds.

Would a Catholic send his children to school to be taught that Catholicism is superstition, and that science is the only savior of mankind?

Why, then, should a free and sensible believer in science, in the naturalness of the universe, send his child to a Catholic school?

Nothing could be more irrational, foolish, and absurd.

My advice to all Agnostics is to keep their children from the orthodox Sunday-schools, from the orthodox churches, from the poison of the pulpits.

Teach your children the facts you know. If you do not know, say so. Be as honest as you are ignorant. Do all you can to develop their minds to the end that they may live useful and happy lives.

Strangle the serpent of superstition that crawls and hisses about the cradle. Keep your children from the augurs, the sooth-sayers, the medicine-men, the priests of the supernatural. Tell them that all religions have been made by folks, and that all the "sacred books" were written by ignorant men.

Teach them that the world is natural. Teach them to be absolutely honest. Do not send them where they will contract diseases of the mind—the leprosy of the soul. Let us do all we can to make them intelligent.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Correspondence.

ORTHODOX ABUSE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Kindly allow me a few words suggested by your notice in this week's *Freethinker*, of the Christian opposition at your Demonstration in Victoria Park on Sunday, August 19. "Personalities" were certainly indulged in, and if they were "foul" the speakers considered they were dealing with a foul subject. For they had a "case," which was to condemn an article on "Morality" (?) appearing in this month's *Truthseeker*, a journal circulated at your meetings, and evidently countenanced by your society; and no doubt the condemnation, hearty and passionate as it was, appeared like "abuse" to those who approved of the article criticised.

Let me say at once how much I deprecate the sarcasm and ill-feeling so frequently shown on each side. The Christians forget their Christian charity, and the Secularists the reason which should control all discussion. I say this in all kindness. I believe all thought should be free; but why should Freethought run counter to all established, lawful ideas of morality? And why should Christians—who consider man a responsible being—condemn his Freethought, without which he cannot be responsible? If the parties would only meet in friendly discussion, each side would find much that was good in the other. Mr. Cohen, in his able article on "The Progress of Secularism," regrets that many who do not agree with the Christian theology, yet accord the Christians their support. They do this because of the good that is inherent in true Christianity, and they do not support Freethought because of the latitude in morality countenanced by many leaders of Freethought. Keep thought *free* by all means, but also keep it *pure*.

I am glad to find that in your admirable paper on "Shakespeare" you express very different opinions about marriage to those held in the *Truthseeker*.

R. J. MARKHAM.

176 Richmond-road, Dalston, N.E., August 29.

[This correspondent is under a serious delusion. The journal he refers to is not "countenanced" by the National Secular Society; neither is it *dis*countenanced. No one but the conductor and the writers is responsible for what appears in its columns. To suppose that the N. S. S. is responsible for the *opinions* of every writer in every journal sold at its Branch meetings is simply ridiculous.—EDITOR.]

DOGS IN HEAVEN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The parsons want to know whether there are dogs in heaven. I know of one there, on the authority of Eusebius, I think. There was a holy dog of Valladolid, who used to slide along on his haunches to receive the holy sacrament, and guarded the graves of the saints in the churchyard against defilement by other dogs. He was canonized by the Bishop of Rome, and "his soul is with Jesus," says the legend. Many miracles were wrought at his tomb, which is in the parish church of San Andres, near Valladolid. And did not St. Anthony's pig enter heaven with him?

C. W. HECKETHORN.

"My dear, you have been very naughty; you must ask God to make you a good child," said a fond mother, on bidding her little girl good-night. The next morning the child announced: "Mamma, I asked God last night to make me a good child, and he answered me." "How did he answer you?" "Why, he said, 'Great Scott! I know many little girls worse than you are!'"

Let no man think that sudden, in a minute,
All is accomplished and the work is done;
Though with thine earliest dawn thou should'st begin it,
Scarce were it ended with thy setting sun.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Re-open September 16.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Watts.

WEST LONDON BRANCH ("Victory," Newnham-street, Queen's-street, Edgware-road): September 11, at 9, Adjourned Committee meeting.

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Radical Club, 16 Durham-row, Stepney): September 14, at 8, Members' meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, E. Pack.
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, W. Heaford; 6.30, C. Cohen.
CLAPHAM COMMON: 3.15, C. Cohen.
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, C. Cohen.
FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, F. A. Davies.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies.
KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, F. A. Davies.
HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, E. Pack.
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, W. Ramsey.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford; 7.15, S. E. Easton. September 12, at 8.15, W. J. Ramsey.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, S. E. Easton, "The Adventures of Samson."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM: H. Percy Ward will lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8—weather permitting.

BRADFORD: H. Percy Ward will deliver two Freethought lectures. For time and place see local papers.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, Half-yearly meeting—balance-sheet, auditors' report. Members only.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, G. Faulkner, "Buddhism"; 6.30, Social meeting in commemoration of Charles Bradlaugh.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Stanley Jones, Special lecture.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Last excursion of season. Members and friends meet at 8.10 a.m. [front of Victoria Station, and will leave by train at 8.28 for Cleethorpes.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "Industrial Problems"; 7.45, Important business.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—September 9, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Clapham Common. 14, Mile End Waste. 16, m., Stratford Grove; a., Victoria Park. 23, m., Ridley-road, Kingsland; a., Clapham Common.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—September 9, m., Newington Reform Club. 16, m., Battersea; e., West Ham. 26, a., Victoria Park. October 7, a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—September 10, Debate at Bradford. 16, Birmingham. 24 and October 1, Debate in Birmingham. December 9, Glasgow.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—September 9, Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 37. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

God in Texas.

MR. GLADSTONE once remarked on the beautiful way in which Providence had fitted up the earth for man's habitation. He spoke as a dweller on an island, which is conveniently situated, enjoying a moderate and equable climate, and extremely free from all sorts of natural convulsions. Great Britain has no volcanoes, it seldom feels the slightest effects of earthquake, it is rarely troubled with violent tempests, and whatever noxious animals it may have possessed in former ages have been practically exterminated during many centuries of settled civilisation. Mr. Gladstone could easily talk as he did from a position of such advantage. But he had only to turn his mind's eye to distant parts of the world in order to perceive the folly of what he was saying. He might have cast a glance, for instance, at India, which is a part of the British Empire, and for the government of which he was more than once to some extent responsible. In that country about 25,000 people are killed every year by reptiles, and about the same number by wild beasts. In another country, Japan, which has latterly been attracting much attention, earthquakes and tidal waves are of frequent occurrence, and sometimes cause tremendous destruction, involving the death of thousands of men, women, and children. Not even Europe is free from these "visitations," although they happen there in a modified form. Europe, too, is on the whole pretty free from blight, pestilence, and famine. But other parts of the globe are less fortunate. We are all aware how India has been suffering from lack of food, and how myriads of her dusky inhabitants have perished, slowly and miserably, of sheer starvation. This has been due to no fault of their own. Rain did not fall to fertilise the earth; consequently there was no crop, or a very poor one; and as the people lived down to the lowest level of subsistence already, they had no prospect left them but that of a sad and lingering death.

"Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." The poet's words are only too true. But the inhumanity of God—for we are told that a deity presides over nature—is the source of far greater misery. What is death on the battlefield to the prolonged torture of death by cancer? What are the massacres of an Abdul the Damned in comparison with the annual slaughter in any single nation by painful diseases, which are supposed to be under the control of Providence? The eyes that are put out by brutal tyrants are nothing to those that are blinded by weakness, malady, or accident. All the murderers in the world are feeble destroyers of life beside a natural destroyer like consumption. We read of infanticide being still practised in some countries, but nature—that is to say, God, if there be a God—practises infanticide all over the world. Even in the most civilised countries one-half of all the children die before they are able to talk plainly, and often after the most pitiable suffering. It is easy, of course, to say that these deaths, and this suffering, are preventible. They would be so if man were wiser and better. But both his intellect and his character are determined by causes which were in operation before he was born. Man did not make himself. We are told that he has a Maker. Very well then, it is the Creator and not the creature who is responsible for all that is, and for all that happens. On the Theistic hypothesis, men are but pieces with which God plays the infinite game of the universe. Christians even allege that he has a great and skilful opponent, called the Devil; and between these two players man is as helpless as are the cards, pawns, chessmen, and dominoes in the games which he plays himself.

Christian Theism prevails in America as well as in Europe, and the theologians over there have the same problems to face that are the despair of intelligent divines over here. Some of them, no doubt, will have a good deal to say about the terrible tornado which has wrought such havoc in Texas. But in the end their sermons and apologies will only come to this, that God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. Theologians always finish in a cloud of mystery. Their final word—to quote Milton—is "Dark, dark, dark!" But when the calamity and the argument are forgotten, they pretend that their faith is as clear as daylight.

This Texas tornado was a terrible affair. Whole towns have been wiped out. Miles of country have been devastated. Hundreds of vessels have been wrecked. Thousands of houses have been destroyed. A multitude of people have been ruined. Men have perished in hundreds. Women with children in their arms have been drowned or crushed to death. The very graves have been turned up, and the buried corpses swept out to sea. Darkness completed the terror of the scene, and the most superstitious may well have thought that the Day of Judgment was at hand. The damage amounts to millions of pounds. But what is that beside the horror, the agony, the sufferings of the killed, and the awful misery of many of the survivors who move about in a strange world without wife, or child, or friend? This is the worst bitterness of such a catastrophe.

"A hospital was blown down" at Galveston. Of course it was. How could it be expected to withstand the storm? But that hospital was presumably full of the sick, and perhaps the dying. One would think that Providence might have made an exception in this case. Hospitals are not to be fired on in besieged cities. But when Providence lets loose the artillery of heaven, nothing is sacred; everything is overwhelmed in a blind fury.

We read that doctors made heroic efforts to help the injured, that the surviving citizens strove to save their fellow men and women, and that the sympathy of America is hastening to the relief of the homeless and destitute. All that is good. It gives a happy thrill to every tender heart. But does it not show that man is more merciful than his God?

G. W. FOOTE.

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Ethical Confusion.

WITH certain ethical writers there appears to be great confusion of thought, both as to the nature of a moral act, and also as to the method which should be adopted to promote right conduct. There is an absence of any definite idea as to the real incentive to the performance of good actions. Unfortunately, it is a habit upon the part of many of those who profess to be ethical teachers to subserve too much to popular prejudices. Such persons, while avowing their desire to discard all allegiance to orthodox restrictions upon questions of morals, mar their advocacy by trying to impart to it a religious tone. That is, they announce their rejection of Christianity, and yet they retain one of its worst features—namely, setting up a false ethical ideal. They obscure modern truths by clinging to the influence of ancient errors. They boldly assert their renunciation of orthodoxy, and, at the same time, fall back upon the very basis of orthodox belief to support their ethical claims. It is such theories as these "that palter with us in a double sense; that keep the word of promise to our ear, and break it to our hope."

This truth has been impressed upon our mind by reading a pamphlet by Dr. Stanton Coit, and a recent article by another prominent worker in the Ethical Movement, Mr. George A. Smith. Dr. Coit, speaking on behalf of the Ethical Society, is particularly anxious to record that his Association is not Agnostic, and that it is "distinct from Positivism, Secularism, and Socialism." Of course, he is quite right in taking this position if he deem it the best course to adopt, but in doing so it would have been more ethical not to have sought to establish the superiority of his own movement by depreciating and misrepresenting other organisations, whose members aim to secure the moral elevation of the people by means free from all theological folly. The Doctor alleges (in his pamphlet, *The Ethical Movement Defined*, pp. 7 and 8) that his advocacy is distinct from Secularism, and to prove this he says:—

> "They [the Secularists], as their very name implies, are reactionists against theology; whereas we demand simply that theology be not made the condition of spiritual fellowship. Moreover, the Secularists, while affirming the dignity and worth of this world, and attempting to reconstruct society, do not lay down good character and right conduct as the starting-point of all social reform; in this we are more definite than they; they are in danger of incoherence, now setting up political power and now industrial revolution as the true means of making society happy and just; whereas we would start from the moral sentiment and recognise that mechanical changes in institutions and the execution of better laws must be supported by the moral consciousness of the community. Environment and law also affect character; but the impetus towards the doing away with evil conditions of life must arise in men who are bound together for the spread of goodness in the world."

Here the Doctor fails to show his usual acumen. His statement of the Secularist's position is from first to last misleading and erroneous. Contrary to his statement, Secularists *do* "lay down good character and right conduct as the starting-point of all social reform." It is not correct to allege that we, as Secularists, set up political power, etc., as the "means of making society happy and just." Undoubtedly such means are useful in progressive work. But the Secular Society is not a political organisation, its efforts being directed to destroying the evils of theology, and to teaching that environment and law *do* affect character. The Secular idea of right and wrong is that neither is the mere accident of the time, and that these terms do not represent a condition which is the result of "chance"; on the contrary, they denote actions which are the outcome of a law based upon the fitness of things. The primary truths in morals are as axiomatic as those in mathematics. Moreover, there is in the mind of every properly constituted person an appreciation of right and a detestation of wrong. We urge that vice should be shunned because it is wrong to individuals, and also to society, to indulge in it; and that virtue should be practised because it is the duty of all to assist, both by precept and example, to elevate the human family.

Dr. Coit seems very desirous that his ethical propaganda should be considered as something distinct from Secularism. But why? So far as the Ethical Movement is used as a medium to inculcate moral principles with a view of elevating the human race, its object is precisely the same as that of the Secularists. In fact, ethical teachers have adopted in this particular the very teachings of Secularism. For instance, the Doctor says the Ethicist's desire is "to change the physical and social environment of men, so that it shall be more favorable to a truly human life.....that right conduct is of supreme importance.....that the grandeur of the motive to be upright and just is not diminished one whit by omitting the ideas of personal immortality and of a personal God." This is exactly what Secularism teaches. It alleges that, with the extensive knowledge which now exists, allied with intellectual culture, it is not difficult to demonstrate that man ought to do his duty for reasons which belong alone to this life. We are told that our forefathers made this island inhabitable by destroying the wild beasts that once infested it; but it appears to the Secularist that a greater work than that remains to be done, which is to subdue the wild passions of man. Secularism further teaches that there are in nature certain laws, independent of any supposed supernatural religion, and that what we term the moral state is one wherein man is enabled to recognise the wisdom of compliance with such laws. It is quite true that men may refuse to obey the moral law; but, if they do, they must suffer in consequence. This is one reason why men should be moral, inasmuch as the fact of being so brings its own reward. It not only secures immunity from suffering, and adds to the healthiness of society, but it exalts those who obey the moral law in the estimation of the real noblemen of nature. A man of honor—one whose word is his bond, who practises virtue in his daily life—wins the respect and confidence of all who know him, and he thereby sets an example that will be useful to emulate; and he at the same time acquires for himself a tranquillity of mind known only to the consistent devotee of human goodness.

While probably agreeing with the Secular teachings here given, Dr. Coit says that Secularists "are reactionists against theology." Yes, we are, and so is the Doctor, if his words have any consistent meaning, as the following statements of his, which we take from his pamphlet referred to above, will show:—"All men know at least sufficiently well for practical judgment what goodness in human character is. But the idea of a personal Creator of the universe has baffled the speculative efforts of the best disciplined and philosophic minds.....In our view of life and the universe the worship of righteousness takes the place which God or Christ holds in the Christian view.....We demand that no one shall make the ideas of a personal God and immortality the bond of religious union.....that right conduct is more important than the worship of a personal God or of Christ in the heart." Surely those who believe in what Dr. Coit here says must be "reactionists against theology." Then why depreciate Secularism for teaching that which the Doctor himself propounds? An ethical teacher should be above fostering the weaknesses and prejudices of popular delusions. The Secularists consider it to be their duty to say what they mean, and to mean what they say. The great difference between Dr. Coit and ourselves appears to be that we, recognising the fallacies and evils of theology, frankly and openly attack them, while he, agreeing with us as to the fallacies and errors, prefers to favor them in a modified form. Which is the more ethical and better method of the two for preparing the human mind for the reception of moral truths we leave the reader to decide.

That the Doctor's mind is still influenced by theological absurdity is evident from his notions of Christ, who, the Doctor thinks, was perfect. He says: "I detect no fault in the life of Christ." He was "absolutely perfect, and the only perfect person that ever lived." To us such statements, to say the least, are astonishing. Will Dr. Coit kindly inform us upon what evidence he bases his erroneous ideas? All that can be known of Christ we learn from the New Testament. But, according to the character given of him there, he was in every particular thoroughly imperfect. Apart from the fact that he revealed nothing of practical value, and that he taught no virtues that were before

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unknown, the emulation of many of the traits in his character would certainly not illuminate human nature to-day, nor would it remove the physical evils or dispel the dense mental and moral darkness which we find existing so extensively in our midst. He taught false notions of existence, had little or no knowledge of science; he misled his followers by claiming to be what he was not, and he deceived himself by his own credulity. He lacked experiential knowledge, frequently living the life of an ascetic, and taking but slight interest in the affairs of this world. Not only was his imperfection apparent in his being subject to such human weaknesses as hunger, anger, and uncontrollable passion, but his very limited experience prevented him from being a perfect man. Moreover, he exhibited no high degree of excellence, discrimination, or courage in any sphere of life in which he was placed. As a son, he lacked affection and consideration for the feelings of his parents; as a teacher, he was mystical and rude; and as a reasoner, he was defective and illogical. Lacking a true method of reasoning or uniformity of character, Christ exhibited a strange example—an example injudicious to exalt and dangerous to emulate. At times he was severe when he should have been gentle. When he might have reasoned he frequently rebuked. When he ought to have been firm and resolute he was vacillating and timid. When he should have been happy and joyful he was sorrowful and desponding. After preaching faith as the one thing needful, he himself lacked it when he required it most. Thus on the cross, when a knowledge of a life of integrity, a sensibility of the fulfilment of a good mission, a conviction that he was dying for a good and righteous cause, and fulfilling the object of his life—when all this should have given him moral strength, we find him giving vent to grief and despair. In this scene we have a true indication of the general character of Christ. Here was one who came on earth with a mission to perform, a part of which was to die on the cross; yet, when the time arrived for his destiny to be fulfilled, he sought to avoid his fate, and he shrank from that death which was said to give life to a fallen world. If Christ had been to his age what Darwin, Spencer, Clifford, and Huxley have been to the present generation; if he had written a book teaching men how to avoid the miseries of life; if he had revealed the mysteries of nature, and exhibited the beauties of the arts and sciences, what an advantage he would have conferred upon mankind!

Next week we will deal with the fallacies of Mr. George A. Smith. CHARLES WATTS.

Another Prop Going.

A LITTLE while back the Methodist Church was lamenting the large leakage in its organisation. Every year thousands dropped away from its membership, and although the gross number of members showed a slight increase, yet, compared with the growth of the population, there was a substantial shrinking. The Wesleyan Methodist body is not peculiar in this respect. If a close examination were made, all religious organisations would be found to be in pretty much the same position. Their growth is more apparent than real; whatever increase there is in the numbers of any Church is trifling compared to the increase in the non-religious population. No strategy seems able to alter this condition of things. Pleasant Sunday afternoon services, sermons baited with the suggestive title "To Men Only," the offer to provide storage for bicycles whose owners may feel inclined to listen to a service by way of a rest; these and hundreds of other dodges are all more or less ineffective to stop the exodus from the Churches. This still continues, and the rising lamentations of the clergy concerning it seem to add to the trouble rather than to diminish it. A few weeks back the Convocation of Canterbury raised the question of the supply and quality of the clergy obtainable. Both were, it seemed, poor, and there did not appear to be any immediate chance of improving either one or the other. And now, added to all these troubles of the religious world, comes the doleful report of the Sunday School Union, which begs to call the prayerful attention of all devout Christians to the fact that Sunday-schools, too, are in an eminently unsatisfactory condition. In common with the Churches, they show a marked decline of membership, so that it is clear that the same causes which thin the adult assemblage operate also in reducing the number of juvenile devotees.

When in 1782 Robert Raikes opened the first Sunday-school, the main object was to provide a little elementary education for the much-neglected laboring classes. Education had hitherto been under the control of the Church, and the Church understood its interest too well to pay much attention to the matter. The schools were opened on Sunday presumably because that was the only day on which the working class possessed a little leisure time. The Church regarded the enterprise of Raikes with anything but serene satisfaction, and, had it had its way, the movement would have come to an early termination. But, as the schools grew, the Church, pursuing its time-honored policy, found it convenient to patronise a movement that it had failed to destroy. One thing was in its favor. The schools were called Sunday-schools, and everything connected with Sunday was expected to be dismally religious, with the result that the schools, instead of being places where some attempts at general instruction were made, gradually became places devoted to the conning of Bible texts and the delivery of addresses far below in merit even the average sermon.

It is only to be expected that the fare served out in Sunday-schools should be of a much poorer quality than that dished up in the churches. With adults some little care and discrimination *must* be exercised; with young children and the immature of both sexes the case is different, and that it is no uncommon feature to find the clergy denouncing a set of beliefs in the pulpit, and conniving at their being taught in the schools under their control. But there is a limit to the endurance of even Sunday-school teachers and pupils, and this has been shown by several events of recent date. Addressing the April meeting of the Yorkshire Association of Sunday-school Unions, the Rev. C. F. Aked, of Liverpool, speaking as one who had, "from the infant-class to the office of superintendent, graduated in the Sunday-school," said:—

> "I have no hesitation in saying that the Sunday-schools of the land are too often the strongholds of obsolete ideas, of obscurantism, of reaction against progress and light, of cast-iron systems which have been repudiated by educated people outside the Sunday-schools for fifty years.....Theories and doctrines and methods which are discredited by every educated preacher in the land, and teaching which you have not heard from any educated pulpit for a score of years or more, are common in our Sunday-schools."

Of course, it might be urged in defence of Sunday-schools that people do not go there, as a rule, to obtain useful knowledge. That has certainly not seemed a powerful motive with the Sunday-school scholars that have come under my notice, nor, judging by the look of the teachers, do they seem capable of imparting it. Why children do go to Sunday-school is easy to discover. Hazlitt said that, if you asked the average middle-class Englishman why he went to church, he would tell you in strict confidence he went because his wife took him; and, so far as *young* children are concerned, they are at Sunday-school because their parents send them. And they are sent, I imagine, for the most part for reasons other than religious. Mr. Howard Evans, writing in the *Christian World*, remarks that "many thousands of parents who are seldom, or never, seen in the House of God have yet such a sense of religious duty as to send their children to our Sunday-schools with more or less regularity." Well, did it never strike Mr. Evans that parents with a strong "sense of religious duty" would have set their children an example by going to church themselves? Is it unreasonable to assume that these "thousands of parents" look on the Sunday-school teacher as a kind of volunteer nursemaid—a function which, I have little doubt, the majority are well fitted to discharge—and, therefore, send their children principally to get them out of the way while they enjoy their Sunday afternoon nap? If all the children sent for this reason were expelled, there would be a sad shrinkage in the number of attendances. And when we get beyond the young children, I am of opinion that the dawning consciousness of sex, with its thousand subtle influences,

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has far more to do with bringing youths of both sexes to Sunday-schools than any interest in Biblical teaching or religious doctrine.

Not that even this is able to keep them there, for in the last annual report of the Sunday-school Union two things are mournfully admitted: first, that there is a tremendous falling off in the number of attendances, and, secondly, that the decrease is greatest among scholars above the age of fourteen years. Taking the figures as they are presented, we find that during the past year the Wesleyan Methodist Church shows a decrease of 5,400 scholars, the Baptists chronicle a decrease of 7,000, Calvinistic Methodists 4,200, United Methodist Free Churches 3,000, Presbyterians 1,400, the Free Church of Scotland 4,300, and the Established Church 7,000. Altogether these seven churches show a substantial decrease of 32,300 scholars—a phenomenon as cheering to the Secularist as it is depressing to the religionist. The above figures represent an actual decrease in the number of scholars on the registers of Sunday-schools, but their significance is increased enormously by two considerations. The first is that, as the population increases at the rate of about 300,000 per year, the loss is really far greater than it appears at first sight, since, even though there were no actual decrease, there would be a loss of ground relatively to population. Secondly, the figures given as to the number of Sunday-school scholars are not quite what they seem. The Education Department reckons the number of scholars in average attendance; the Sunday-schools take the number on the register, and these figures, on the testimony of men engaged in the work, represent at least a third more than the actual attendance.

But a still more significant sign of the times is the age at which the greatest decrease occurs. The attendance of very young children can hardly be urged as due to their individual inclination. They are there because they have been sent by their parents, and the motives dictating *their* action may be, as I have said, of a very mixed character. But if we take the ages of the children in actual attendance, it is found that the decrease is almost entirely accounted for by boys and girls over the age of fifteen. The Wesleyans lost 5,400, and out of that number 4,300 were above fourteen years of age. The Church of England lost 7,000, and, but for the enormous influx of infants, the decrease would have reached 17,000. The inference from these figures is plain. So long as the children are without any voice in the matter, they keep to Sunday-school for the all-sufficient reason that their parents send them there; but as soon as they are old enough to exert some individual choice they drift outside.

Mr. Howard Evans remarks on these figures: "It comes to this, that while the mothers of small children are as ready as ever to send them, very often for their own convenience, we are losing our elder boys and girls at the most formative period of life." Yes, it comes to that, and yet more than that. To say that the churches and chapels are losing control over the elder members of their flocks is a bold statement of fact. It does not, however, touch the kernel of the question. What it really means is that the revolt against supernaturalism, which has already infected all classes of adults, is sinking downwards to the younger classes of the community. The children are following in the steps of their elders, and, in losing its hold on them, Christianity is losing one of its most important positions.

As educational institutions, the Sunday-schools are valueless. They neither impart sound instruction nor awaken a desire for it. All that constitutes the real glory and greatness of life—the wonders of science, the beauties of literature, the glories of art, the duties of citizenship—are neglected in order to impress upon the child views of the Bible and of Christianity which, as even a clergyman admits, are disowned by all educated people. During the most susceptible years children's minds are impressed with the value of outworn fables and untrustworthy records, and are finally turned out into the world saddled with, to use Emerson's words, "the dead weight of a Sunday-school," to unlearn afterwards what has been forced on them against their will.

Happily, as the figures I have quoted show, this species of once-a-week mental chloroforming is losing its hold on the people. Even the Sunday-school cannot altogether secure itself from the influence of the time-spirit, and the same forces that have weakened the general body of Christian beliefs are making themselves felt here. But of one thing I think we may be sure. As the clergy find themselves losing in the Sunday-schools, where children cannot be legally compelled to attend, they will fight all the more strenuously to keep their hold on the public schools, where all are compelled to go. A weakening of their power in one direction will involve an attempt to strengthen it in others. It is the prime duty of all Secularists to see that this attempt is not crowned with success. Once every three years there is given to nearly all the chance of saying something decisive on this matter; and when the opportunity does occur, we should see that there, at least, the agents of the Black Army shall not find the recruits they have failed to obtain elsewhere.

C. Cohen.

A Talk About Heaven.

Every now and then, when a child applies for admission into our Secular Sunday-school at Leicester, I have to call on the father or mother, in accordance with my invariable rule, in order to make sure that he or she quite understands our non-theological position. The other day I made one of these visits of inquiry, and wanted to know if Mrs. H. cared for her daughter Lily to attend our school. Our conversation ran something in this way:—

"You see, Mrs. H., our Secular Society does not teach the same things as the Churches and Chapels do, and I want you to see the difference before you send Lily to our Hall."

"Well, I should like to know what Secular means."

"We tell the children about their daily duty to parents and playfellows and neighbors, but we tell them nothing about God."

"Nothing about God!"

"We tell them that if they act harshly or untruthfully it makes other people unhappy, and the unhappiness will come back upon themselves. We think that is reason enough, without saying anything about hell."

"Nothing about hell!"

"And we remind them of the bad things in the world, and impress on them that unless they—the boys and girls, and the men and women—join together and strive, the evil will never be changed. So we try to make them think about making this world pleasanter to live in, and we say nothing about heaven."

"Nothing about heaven!"

"We persuade them into seeing the need of self-help, and so, in our school, we never say prayers."

"Never say prayers!"

"Do you agree with this way of thinking, Mrs. H.?"

"I can't let Lily come, sir."

"No?"

"What you teach the children is all right, I daresay. But I feel I must have a heaven to look forward to, and I should like Lily to look forward to it as well. This world is hard enough, with all its worries and troubles, and we should be in a poor way if we could not afterwards go to a place of rest."

"But how do you know heaven will be any more peaceful than the earth? You know no one who has ever been there and come back?"

"No; but when my son lay dying he told me he knew he was going there."

"But, Mrs. H., when your rooms get dirty, you don't *hope* they will get clean; you know that unless *you* clean them, God will not. And are we likely to get a clean world or a sweet heaven unless we make it ourselves?"

"Ah, but God gives us the strength to work."

"If that is so, why does not God give strength to us all? Why does he allow many to go about crippled and palsied?"

"I don't know; but I couldn't do without the thought of heaven, and so Lily can't come."

The good woman was perfectly frank. She merely put into homely illogic what the theologians express in high-sounding and imposing, but not less illogical, affirmations. There is absolutely no proof of the existence of heaven, and yet thousands of suffering people

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cling to the hope, and know it is only a hope. The hope is perfectly natural. It is no more unreasonable than hoping that the noonday's pain will have passed away at even. The evil is done when the hope is fostered and incited. Seizing on a weakness of human nature, the priest has transformed the hope into a dogma. He takes a fancy and feeds it with promises. Sadness weeps and prays for consolation, and the priest says, "Your consolation is assured in the Hereafter." Now, we all know what happens when a man begins to entertain a more or less vague expectation of a fortune. He broods, he dreams, he lives in the future. He hears not To-day whispering, "Do your work"; he hears only the lullaby of To-morrow, singing of unrealised riches.

It is chiefly the unfortunate who love the vision of heaven. Comfortable villadom prefers the substantial upholstery of earth to the ethereal accommodation of the skies. Anguish is the mother of paradise, and the New Jerusalem is built, not of pearls and jasper, but of tears and disappointments. I do not complain that the poor should try to deaden care with the narcotic of the hope of heaven. I complain that the sleek and well-provided should encourage this illusion. It is meanness made religious, and selfishness broidered with pious appearance. Every sigh directed to heaven is a loss of the energy of will which should be used in the remedy of evil. Heaven is a perpetual invitation to laziness. If we are prosperous and we meet the miserable, we ought to do two things. We ought to search for the causes of the misery, and we ought to induce the miserable to co-operate in the struggle against injustice or unhealthy conditions.

It is often said that it would be an unkindness to rob the ignorant and the wretched of the prospect of repose in a world to come. That is not true. Go to the ignorant and the wretched and tell them honestly (a still better word would be honorably) that there is no solvency in the heaven-doctrine; that a bankrupt world is no guarantee of divine credit in Zion; that human failure can only be redeemed by human effort; and that man—man who hates, slays, steals, and oppresses—is the only agent of salvation. This is a paradox, but it is not discouraging. It startles, but it does not numb. It drags us into the awful presence of facts, but there is a more deadly influence in an irrational hope than in a terrible truth. When suffering awakes to the knowledge of its real situation, it gathers up its little strength to grapple with its enemy. It silences the psalm and puts out its hand for the sword. It gazes no longer at the clouds for the advent of angels, but at the earth for stones to fit its sling. It inspects human nature more eagerly and closely. Is it not possible that this nature which hates, slays, steals, and oppresses, may conceal within its bosom a store of love and helpfulness? Can this better nature be appealed to? Can the hand of tyranny be made to bless, and can the eye that despises be kindled into tenderness? We pray in vain to God to give us our daily bread. May we not succeed better if we pray to publicans, sinners, and foes? Perhaps, after all, man is more likely to aid man than God is. Matthew Arnold tells in one of his sonnets how, in a West London square, a beggar woman "let the rich pass with frozen stare." She waited till some laborers went by; these were her kinsmen in sorrow; she sent her daughter to ask alms, and the girl came back with money in her hand. The beggar pleaded not with aliens, but with

> friends and sharers in a common fate.
> She turns from that cold succor which attends
> The unknown little from the unknowing great,
> And points us to a better time than ours.

It will be a better time when we turn from the alien splendor of God to the modest, but real, friendship of our fellow-man.

F. J. GOULD.

Burglars have visited Chester Cathedral and committed "sacrilege." They rifled the collection-boxes, and (worse still!) they used one of the altar candles to light them abou the place. It is even said that when they had done they carelessly flung the candle on the floor. But what on earth were they to do with it? They couldn't eat it, and it wasn't worth taking away. Anyhow, the local police are making investigations, so the criminals may take it easy.

The Little "Beetle."

How doth the little "beetle" crawl
On life's progressive way;
Some centuries hence he'll reach the point
Where sceptics are to-day.

How doth the little spouter spout
On Sundays for an hour,
And gather money from the jays
He gets within his power.

How doth the Bible-banger bang
The pulpit with his paw,
To wake his congregation up
To hear him wag his jaw.

How doth the "Short-and-Codlin" "cod"
The folks that in him trust,
The silly flats that have to work
To earn an honest crust.

How doth the little pastor pass
The church collection-box,
To buy the "savages" some boots
And furnish them with socks.

How doth the chiselling "choker" choke
With laughter up his sleeve;
He knows he lives by telling lies
That jugginses believe.

How doth this world's maligner line
His purse with worldly dross,
In spite of what was taught by Christ,
A portion of his "joss."

How doth the little "pilot" pile
And lay the rhino up,
In order that "to-morrow" he
May breakfast, dine, and sup.

How doth the Sheol shunner shun
His promised trip to heav'n;
He likes to linger here below—
He's rather more than seven.

How doth the little curate cure
The ladies' souls' disease,
By mashing them at Church bazaars,
At picnics, and at teas.

How doth the clacking cleric clear
The pews inside his church:
"Once bit, twice shy," folks pass it by,
And leave him in the lurch.

How doth the soul-consoler sole
Or heal your worn-out boots?
Don't trust in him, or else you'll starve,
Have nothing on your "toots."

How doth the little humbug "hum
And ah" when he's attacked
And asked to prove a gospel lie
To be a naked fact.

How doth the devil-dodger dodge
Each fact that we adduce,
And bolster up his rotten case
With slander and abuse.

How doth the man of bunkum "bunk"
And vanish like a spark
When challenged by an "infidel"
On Sundays in the park.

How doth the wily wheedler we'd
Much better be without
Damn all the scientific men—
They're putting him to rout.

How doth the gospel-grinder grind
And gnash his teeth with rage;
He knows that soon he'll have to work
To earn a weekly wage.

ESS JAY BEE.

The Soft Answer.

A Chinaman of great dignity and some splendor of dress was getting off an elevated train in New York the other day, says the *Commercial Advertiser*, when a white rowdy called after him: "Are you a Boxer?"

Another rough added some abuse, and roared with laughter, and then the Chinaman, who had got off the car, turned. He waited till the gates were closed; then he answered in pretty clear English: "Good-bye, you Clistian."

Then the gateman and some passengers laughed, and the roughs slunk into the car.

—*Daily Express.*

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Acid Drops.

"I have no anxiety whatever for the future," says Emperor William, "for God is with us. He will help us through." Well, if "us" means Germany, a great deal of "helping through" is certainly needed. The astute attitude of Russia has made it extremely awkward for shouting William. "Me and God" seem to have a difficult job on hand in China.

Emperor William shines as an orator, particularly when under the influence of religion, which is often a more potent spirit than any manufactured by distillers. The stenographer whose duty it is to take down the imperial utterances verbatim says that William has delivered 700 of them since 1889; which beats the record of the late Mr. Gladstone. It also appears that the Emperor's volubility is a terror to reporters. He fetches out from 275 to 300 syllables a minute. It reminds us of George Meredith's saying about a charming French girl that "thought flew and tongue followed; or rather, tongue flew and thought followed." But what is pretty in a bright and lovely girl of seventeen is rather giddy in an almost middle-aged monarch.

Mr. J. Abbott, M.A., writing to a London newspaper from Cambridge, asserts that the Christian missionaries in China are very ill-equipped for their work. "Since 1887," he says, "the writer of this has tried to get University men and others to grapple face to face with the heathenism, agnosticism, and other vital questions in London and elsewhere, but every attempt has failed. Bishops, professors, and undergraduates, the clergy and Nonconformist ministers alike, have shirked the question. If we are not fitted to grapple with these questions at home, how can we grapple with them abroad?"

The recent criticism of foreign missions seems to have elicited some curious admissions and some very contradictory statements from the Christian camp. The *Catholic Times* was early in the field denying that the Romish missions had done anything to stir up strife. We can hardly believe that. Nor can the *Methodist Times*, which says: "It is sadly true that ever since the Jesuits went to China they have been political firebrands there, and have mischievously interfered with Chinese politics. After the last war the French (who are ultramontane abroad and Atheist at home) compelled the Chinese Government to give the Romanists one of the finest sites in Peking for a great cathedral. Quite recently the Romanists have been scheming to secure for their priests the status and authority of Mandarins."

Protestant missionaries, of course, have done nothing of that sort. The *Methodist Times* hastens to assure us that these latter have "held themselves entirely aloof from political questions, and have kept themselves strictly to their own business. It is the greed of merchants and the ambitions of politicians, combined with the mischievous intrigues of Roman Catholic priests, which have done all the harm." On the other hand, merchants say that if it were not for the missionaries, both Roman and Protestant, no great antagonism would have been excited. So far as commerce is concerned, they and the Chinese are on a friendly footing.

The *Methodist Times* goes one more, and asserts that "it is sheer waste of time for Agnostic journalists and mere politicians to suggest that there should be some restrictions upon the activities of our missionaries. On that point even the authority of Queen Victoria herself ceases in the presence of Jesus Christ."

What! are there no restrictions to be placed on the Roman Catholic missionary and the Jesuits, who, according to the *M. T.* itself, have acted so mischievously? Apparently it is only "*our* missionaries"—*i.e.*, Protestant, and preferably Methodist, missionaries—who are to have a free hand in the Flowery Land. The introduction of Jesus Christ does not tend to elucidate matters. All the Christian missionaries go there in his name—even the Jesuits who have turned out such "firebrands." How is the poor heathen Chinee to distinguish between them? They all want to ram down his throat a religion which he regards, and perhaps rightly regards, as inferior to the faith of his ancestors.

The *Review of the Week* recently had a most convincing article on "The Failure of Foreign Missions." It pointed to the case of Canton as a specimen of the general work. Here there are five missionaries and six stations, and, though the mission has been established ninety-three years, the present Church membership is only 253. Even such few converts as are made, says the writer, "come almost entirely from the less educated and poorer classes, whose adherence is influenced by appeals to their material advantage and by considerations other than those of religious conviction."

One observation which the writer makes will strike most people as very pertinent. He alludes to "the systematic filching of their pence from little children by such means as 'juvenile auxiliaries,' 'children's missionary bands,' Sunday-school collections, home boxes, 'mite boxes,' and all the rest of it, which savors too much of the methods of Mrs. Pardiggle to be pleasant."

A letter in the *Times* draws attention to some statements on missionary enterprise which appear in a work published in 1894 by Dr. Morrison, formerly the *Times* Peking correspondent. One of these statements is sufficiently striking. During the year 1893, says Dr. Morrison, 1511 Protestant missionaries converted 3,127 Chinese at a cost of £350,000. Very few of the 3,127 converts gained at this enormous expenditure became, in his opinion, genuine believers.

Mr. Arnold White contributes a lengthy article to the *Sunday Sun*, in which he advocates the appointment of an independent Commission to the chief foreign mission centres for the purpose of ascertaining the actual facts. As he significantly observes: "The world hitherto has received its information mainly from missionaries themselves, or from their supporters. Occasionally an individual traveller, like Dr. Morrison, in his *Australian in China*, attempts an impartial survey, but nowhere is there to be found an accurate survey or judicial opinion based on knowledge and authority of the actual results of a century of Christian missions. During the past hundred years £70,000,000 have been expended on missions by the Protestant societies alone."

If the public, says Mr. Arnold White, are deceived (as he believes them to be deceived) on the mission results as a whole, it is well that the facts should be established in the light of day. As a rule, with such exceptions as have recently occurred, missionaries have a much better time of it than they are usually disposed to admit. "The man without capital or saleable ability, who wishes to marry early—and, as Burke says, the desire for propagating opinion is closely related with the wish to propagate the race—can rarely do better than accept a call into the mission field with the girl of his choice. A hundred years ago a missionary took his life in his hands when he received his marching orders. To-day, whatever else he may encounter, his portion will include a certain income, the possibility of political power, protection by the Foreign Office and the Admiralty, with national revenge by gunboats if he loses his life, a pension in case of disablement or ill-health, and a rising income with the redundant cradle. He may have disagreeables to meet, but they are certainly no greater, and often not so great, as those of the gold-seeker, the pioneer planter, or the frontier farmer."

Marie Corelli's much-advertised and bepuffed new novel is out at last. It is entitled *The Master Christian*, and as Hall Caine is responsible for a novel called *The Christian*, besides being engaged on another dealing with the Church of Rome, the nasty word "plagiarism" is flying about. And the matter having been taken up by the *Daily Mail*, the great, yea, thrice-great, Marie Corelli explains that she has only seen Hall Caine once in her life, and apparently does not want to see him again. Moreover, she avoids reading his books "on principle"—the said principle being just her personal antipathy. It seems that Hall Caine was reader to Messrs. Bentley, the publishers, when Marie Corelli was trying to introduce her first novel to the world, and he did his level best to get that immortal masterpiece rejected. Hence she has "a very natural antipathy" to him, which she characteristically treats as a "principle." For our part, we should say that Marie Corelli lost nothing by not reading *The Christian*, and that Hall Caine will lose as little by not reading *The Master Christian*. Both books are trumpery exploitations of the silly sentimentalism of latter-day Christianity. "Sentiment without reason," said Charlotte Bronte, "is the washiest thing in the world." Were she living now, she would have no difficulty in finding two convincing illustrations.

Stands Scotland where it did? Hardly. The country hasn't shifted, but the people have. Heresy has permeated most of her religious circles, and the old standards of faith are being widely abandoned. Indeed, the mischief has become quite alarming to the more orthodox Scots. The Free Church of Scotland Defence Association, for instance, has just issued a four-page leaflet on the subject. Extracts are given from the lectures and writings of Professor W. Gray Elmslie, Dr. Ross Taylor, Professor Denny, Professor Martin, Dr. Whyte, Professor Marcus Dods, Professor G. A. Smith, and the late Professor Drummond. Finally, the Christian people of Scotland, or at least her Free Churchmen, are called upon to make up their minds whether they will follow such teachers to the perdition of unbelief, or "raise again the old Scottish watchword—For Christ, his Crown, and Covenant." It is a very pretty quarrel as it stands. It is ignorance against knowledge, credulity against criticism; the old night of bigotry frowning over the dawn of the new day of free inquiry.

The Established Presbytery of Dundee is alarmed at the growing desecration of the holy Sabbath. It has discovered that no less than 567 shops were open on one particular

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Sunday. There were 36 ice cream shops, 68 Temperance bars, and 268 for confections, while 102 were "perhaps necessary," such as chemists and dairies. The Presbytery "deplores the prevalence of this evil," and is ready to co-operate with other public bodies in Scotland to secure such legislation as will stop or reduce this "uncalled-for and unnecessary Sabbath trading." How ready these "spiritual" guides are to call in the constable! And, after all, what is their object? Simply to put down whatever runs counter to their professional interests. When will the British public recognise that clericalism is a trade like others registered in the directories?

No doubt parsonic influence is at the bottom of the prosecution of a number of poor folks who try to earn an honest penny on Sunday mornings by selling plants, flowers, poultry, and various cheap articles of merchandise in East-street, Walworth, S.E. Locally, the street is known as "the Lane," apparently so-called as the southern counterpart of Petticoat-lane. It is not a thoroughfare in which obstruction to traffic would be felt. The residents and shopkeepers, as well as the costers who take up their "pitches" alongside the pavement, all look forward to Sunday morning when a little trade—useful to vendors and purchasers alike—may be done. The people who walk up and down are of the poorer class, but they are singularly well-behaved. The police would never have interfered with the costers on their own initiative. Why should they? Any noise and disorder about this part of Walworth are mostly created by Salvation bands and Bible-thumpers. Some bigoted church and chapel goers have evidently complained—not about the nuisance they themselves create or sanction, but about the inoffensive sale of flowers, plants, birds, cast-off clothing, etc. The result is that a number of the small traders have been summoned at Lambeth Police-court for Sunday trading, and fined 10s. each.

Several hundreds of inhabitants in the neighborhood have signed a petition against this persecution, desiring, they say, "to maintain the Sunday trading, as it assists everyone, except in those places where a few try to do away with it under the miserable cloak of piety."

The Sunday League is "going it strong" the wrong way. Perhaps it is the atmosphere of the Alhambra that is demoralising. At any rate, the League is arranging to show some "excellent cinematograph pictures of the Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau" there on Sunday evenings. We suppose the next thing will be a Christmas sermon. No doubt the Bishop of London would oblige with that part of the entertainment.

Canon Newbolt, of St. Paul's, was recently reported to have said that the English people once firmly believed in three things—Sunday, the Bible, and hearing sermons—but are now fast coming to disbelieve in all three. The *Methodist Times* takes him to task. It cannot for consistency's sake say much about Sunday, because that would conflict with all its jeremiads in previous issues on the secularisation of the Lord's Day. As to the Bible, it says that certain "obsolete and mistaken ideas" concerning that book have been abandoned.

We should like to know, with some degree of definiteness, what these "obsolete and mistaken notions" are. How long have they been abandoned? And why? Are they, perchance, the "mistaken notions" which so-called "infidels" were the first to assail at the cost of fine, imprisonment, and every kind of persecution at the hands of the Bible believers of their time?

"If," says the *Methodist Times*, "the Bible Society would abandon its suicidal policy of clinging to the very inferior so-called 'Authorised Version' (which never was authorised), and issue the immeasurably superior Revised Version, wisely and attractively printed, its sales would be unprecedented." The idea is sanguine, but, as the Bible Society seems to be obdurate, why does not Price Hughes appeal to the Lord? It is his book, and he ought to be specially interested in the way in which it is presented to his creatures. We feel that we have a real ground of complaint against him for allowing us to be put off so long with an "immeasurably" inferior version. No other living author would be so lax.

One hundred thousand pounds a year more for the poor clergy! That is the tempting possibility held out by Mr. William Biddell, formerly member for West Suffolk, to workers in the Lord's vineyard (Church of England section) who now complain of being ill-paid. What a fascinating prospect! But, alas, how visionary it must appear to the "poor clergy" when they find that he proposes to secure this surplus by reducing the payment of bishops, and abolishing deans, resident canons, minor canons and archdeacons, and letting or selling the present canons' residences. If this is all the "poor clergy" have to depend upon, it will be an unconscionably long time before they find any alleviation of their sad lot.

Some time since, says the *Christian Budget*, a woman delivered a lecture in Lancashire against Christianity, in which she declared that the Gospel narrative of the life of Christ was a myth and a fable. One of the mill hands who listened to her obtained leave to ask a question. "The question," he said, "I want to ask is this: thirty years ago I was a curse to this town. The teetotallers got hold of me, but I broke the pledge so often that they said it was no use trying me any longer. Then Christ took hold of me, and now I am a member of the Church, a class leader, and a superintendent of the Sunday-school. How can Christ be a myth?" The lady, we are told, was silent. This latter statement proves the story to be a fabrication. No Freethought lecturer would remain silent, except in momentary wonder how any man could be rescued from drunkenness by the worker of the alleged miracle at Cana.

Mr. H. Winter, of Middleton College, New Brighton, writes to the *Methodist Times*: "In my own opinion (and I have had some little experience as a young man and a teacher of young men), the difficulty of getting earnest, zealous, and educated young men for the ministry of our Church will increase with years unless, and until, the theological basis of the Methodist Church is broadened."

The wife of a Ceylon planter died, and the clergyman called to express his sympathy, and to make arrangements for the funeral. Neither the man nor his wife had been Church members. The husband was prostrated with grief, but he roused himself as the clergyman entered. "Is there any particular portion of the Scriptures you would like me to read at the funeral?" asked the clergyman. The husband sat up, mopped his eyes, and thought for a moment. "Well, you might try that bit about Samson and the foxes," he exclaimed finally. "I think that's about as funny as any of 'em."

The plague in Glasgow must, of course, be a "judgment" for something or other; the elect are not yet quite decided what. An Edinburgh saint discovers the sin in Sabbath desecration. He says: "About the plague in Glasgow it is right to discover secondary causes, such as sanitary arrangements, etc.; but there is no discussion of the primary cause—viz., Divine judgments for Sabbath desecration. Hence, if Leith desires to avoid the plague, let them say 'No' to the proposal of the Tramway Company to run trams on Sunday."

Commenting upon the above specimen of sanctimonious cant, the *Sunday Chronicle* caustically observes that "the pious writer does not realise that the absence of Sunday trams is worse even than the plague, and almost as bad as the plague of self-righteous nuisances who write to newspapers."

A gentleman observed his little son attentively studying a map of the world. "What place are you looking for, Willie?" he inquired. The small boy knit his brows, and travelled a circuitous route with his forefinger before he answered earnestly: "Twyin' to find Christendom!"

It looks as if the Sunday-school system, if not on the decline, is certainly not in a very flourishing condition just now. According to Mr. Howard Evans, the Church Sunday-schools show a decrease of 7,000 children; the Wesleyan schools have decreased by 5,400 children, Baptist are 7,000 less, Calvinistic Methodist 4,200, and United Methodist have 3,000 less. The leakage is regarded as the more serious because it has taken place amongst the older children.

That hopeful spirit of the High Church party, Lord Hugh Cecil, does not seem to be very choice in his illustrations. In regard to the law regulating public worship, he says it would be possible for five prostitutes, resident in the parish, to institute a prosecution of the clergy of St. Alban's, Holborn, for wearing vestments. Well, even modern Magdalenes may have a just objection to man-millinery. Certainly they are entitled to be heard on matters appertaining to dress. Why should the mere male parson try to outstrip them in costly, eye-arresting raiment, which may not, after all, suit his often ungainly figure?

According to a writer in one of the leading London dailies, the clergy are apt to make the most of the hospitality which is extended to them when they go to Church Congresses. An eminent judge, it appears, agreed to entertain a strange clergyman, and on the morning of the day on which the guest was to arrive there came the following telegram: "Shall arrive at midnight. Have beefsteak, hot bath, and bottle of claret ready. Be sure and warm claret."

"The great unhappiness of peoples," says the Paris *Figaro*, "is perhaps—who knows?—not to have sufficiently often dined together." This is *apropos* of the generous entertainment of the British Chambers of Commerce in the French capital. For our part, we believe the *Figaro* has hit upon one of the most important truths. Writing long diplomatic letters and newspaper articles, and delivering big speeches

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on international questions, are simply wretched mistakes. Human vanity and mistrust come in and spoil everything. The proper thing to do is to bring people together, and let them talk face to face. But before they begin talking they should dine together. It is in no spirit of levity, but in real earnest, that we suggest the following way of settling disputes between nations. Let the representatives of each side spend a social week together before they begin business; and when they do begin business, let every conference be preceded by a good dinner, winding up with coffee and cigars. If that wouldn't lead to wise, honest, and just agreements, nothing on earth would; and quarrels and wars would be doomed to last for ever.

Trade disputes might be settled, cheaply and agreeably, in the same fashion. A good dinner wouldn't cost as much as a strike or a lock-out, and is ever so much nicer. Instead of making faces at each other through correspondence meant to appear in the newspapers, representatives of the employers and the workmen should sit down at a round dinner-table, and discuss their differences after eating and drinking together. We even venture to say that if they all got drunk—which we don't by any means recommend—their decisions would in all likelihood be still better for both parties concerned than a prolonged, bitter, and expensive wrangle.

In that delightful "Imaginary Conversation" between David Hume and John Horne, written by the great Walter Savage Landor, a somewhat similar idea is expressed beautifully. The philosophy, the humanity, the sly wit of Hume, all appear in the final sentences: "If men would permit their minds like their children to associate freely together, if they would agree to meet one another with smiles and frankness, instead of suspicion and defiance, the common stock of intelligence and of happiness would be centupled. Probably those two men who hate each other most, and whose best husbandry is to sow burs and thistles in each other's path, would, if they had ever met and conversed familiarly, have been ardent and inseparable friends. The minister who may order my book to be burned to-morrow by the hangman, if I, by any accident, had been seated yesterday by his side at dinner, might perhaps in another fortnight recommend me to his master, for a man of such gravity and understanding as to be worthy of being a privy councillor, and might conduct me to the treasury bench."

"Providence" does not keep vigilant watch over "General" Booth's establishments. One of them, at Whitechapel, has just been destroyed by fire. Prayer was of no avail, and the Fire Brigade had to put out the conflagration.

One thing befalleth them; yea, they have all one breath. Mr. Eden Harper, a master boilermaker, has been crushed to death at his own works. He was a prominent member of the Wesleyan Church. But the boiler that fell upon him took no notice of his denomination. It treated it as though he were a Secularist.

Archdeacon Hodgson, rector of Handsworth, slipped while climbing one of the great glaciers in Switzerland. He glided down the grassy slope towards a deep abyss, and in another minute or so he would have been in heaven. But not being in a hurry to go there, the reverend gentleman jambed his foot into the ground, and saved himself at the cost of a broken ankle. He walks about lame now in this miserable vale of tears.

"Nothing that is false can live." So says the *Lancashire Daily Post*. But there is not a word of truth in it. Some lies are thousands of years old, and are still fresh and vigorous. All religious creeds are lies—well-developed lies—and most of them beat old Methusaleh. Christianity itself has existed for nearly two thousand years.

The American Women's Christian Temperance Union has declared against President McKinley's re-election, because he refused to abolish the Army canteen. It doesn't seem to have occurred to the zealous ladies that the American soldiers, not the American Christian Temperance women, are the principal persons to be consulted in this "canteen" business. Nor does it seem to have occurred to them that Jesus Christ, their Lord and Savior, was (so to speak) twitted with frequenting the canteen himself. He was certainly not a teetotaller. He appears to have drunk what was going. And his first miracle, according to the fourth Gospel, justifies us in classing him amongst those who like to know there is a large supply behind the present consumption.

Stephen Crane, the brilliant young American writer, who died recently in England, was visited by Mr. Robert Barr, a brother novelist, a few weeks before the end came. "Robert," murmured Stephen Crane, "when you come to the hedge—that we must all go over—it isn't bad. You feel sleepy—and—you don't care. Just a little dreamy curiosity—which world you're really in—that's all."

A poor Irish harvester was found with his throat cut at Connington, in Huntingdonshire. The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide, but no evidence to show the deceased's state of mind when he committed the act." Accordingly, the burial took place at night, in consonance with the Christian law of England. The body was conveyed in a cart from a stable to the churchyard, and, as it was dark, the bearers groped their way among the tombs. As it was being lowered into the grave in silence—for no Christian rites were allowable—a young woman came forward and dropped a few flowers upon the parish coffin. Her tender act made no difference to the poor dead Irishman, but it showed that she had a heart superior to her country's creed.

Dr. Parker is reported to be inconsolable for the loss of his third wife. He got over the loss of the other two more easily. Perhaps these misfortunes affect us more as we grow older. It is also reported that Dr. Parker refused to attend family prayers at a friend's house. "I want a thorough holiday," he said, "a holiday even from prayers." How the deuce will he get on in heaven?

"Pessimistic Secularism" is the heading the *Daily News* gives to its review of Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Introduction to English Politics*—a book which, it says, is "very eloquent, striking, and powerful, but not convincing"—rather "disenchanting." Mr. Robertson's politics, our contemporary finds are "the politics of cynical disbelief in the wisdom which guides mankind." This is a very roundabout way of saying that Mr. Robertson is an Atheist.

The *Daily News* has broken out again in another place. Referring to Sir William Turner's "eloquent" Presidential address to the British Association, it says that while dealing with "the deepest things and essentials in human life, nay, with the very origin of life itself," he never so much as alluded, from the first word to the last, to "Him, who, in the opinion of some of earth's wisest and greatest and best, is the Lord and Giver of Life, to Whom all hearts are open, and from Whom no secrets are hid." Is this another case of cynical disbelief in omniscience?

"Much of the work of a Church Congress," the *Daily News* says, "might just as well be done in a Social Science Congress." Precisely so. The Church is gradually discharging old cargo and taking in new. By-and-bye it will have nothing of its original stock left except the flag at the masthead.

How the times have changed! When the prophet Jonah denounced the city of Nineveh, and prophesied its destruction in forty days, if its inhabitants did not repent and turn to the Lord, the king and all his people put on sackcloth and ashes and obtained a reprieve. But the prophet who tried the same thing on in Fleet-street the other day, pronouncing the speedy doom of London, was soon surrounded by a crowd of boys, who shouted "There's 'air." Jonah himself would have met with the same reception from the boys of Fleet-street. Luckily for his reputation, he went to another city, a long while ago; so long, indeed, that many people think he never went at all. But that's blasphemy.

"Doing the civil thing to God" was the rather startling headline of a newspaper report of Canon Wilberforce's sermon in St. John's Church, Westminster. "Many," the preacher feared, "thought that a week of self-pleasing in town and irritability in their homes was completely condoned by doing the civil thing to God on Sunday in attending service, followed by greetings at the door, and strong criticism of the sermon and music at the midday meal." We quite understand that Canon Wilberforce does not like criticism of the sermon, for his own effusions will not stand much of it, although he is popular and "eloquent." Still, he is ill-advised to grumble at people who go to church at all, under whatever conditions. There is a growing disposition to stay away from "the house of God," and very little may turn the scale with thousands who are still in the habit of attending, at least occasionally. Rating your customers is always bad business.

Vesuvius is active again, and people living on the lower slopes are becoming uneasy. They are appealing to the Virgin Mary and all the saints for protection. But they had better look out for themselves. Volcanic lava is no respecter of piety. It will settle a Catholic as readily as an Atheist. Rather more so, for the Atheist is likely to take precautions.

"The Scarlet Sin" is the flash title of a new play by Mr. G. R. Sims and Mr. Arthur Shirley. The principal character is a burglar who gets "reformed" by the Salvation Army. Evidently "Dagonet" is also among the prophets—probably for the sake of profits.

"You got into Parliament through the votes of the drunken cobblers of Northampton, who elected that foul atheist beast Bradlaugh." This elegant writing is from the pen of one of Mr. Labouchere's correspondents. It looks as though some Church-and-State Tory scribbler were out of a job.

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Special.

The FREETHINKER has been for several months, and is still, published at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed. Readers are warned against sending orders to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. Those premises have for some time been definitively closed, and Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, who cannot be answerable for anything sent to him.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 16, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.C.; 7.30, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ."

September 23, London; 30, Glasgow.

October 7, Manchester; 21, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—September 16 and 23, Camberwell; 30, Athenæum Hall. October 7, Athenæum Hall; 9 and 10, debate at Bolton; 14 (Sunday), Bolton; 21, Birmingham. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your valuable batches of cuttings.

JOHN ROSS (Liverpool), sending us £1 towards the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, says: "If only all Freethinkers gave ever so little, the amount collected would be a surprise to us all."

"ALTCAR" writes:—"I have often read in the *Freethinker* your eulogies of Meredith, and I have lately read the *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* three times, and each time with increased pleasure. I can think of no novelist who so resembles Shakespeare in his knowledge of human character. But I am still doubtful as to the inner meaning of the work—the lesson the author means to convey. I mean more particularly as regards the wonderful *system* of the baronet. Will you tell me in answers to correspondents if the system is ridiculed or the reverse?" We are afraid that our correspondent's perplexity cannot be relieved by such a brief answer as we should have to give in this column. One of these fine days, and perhaps before very long, we shall write an article on this very novel; for which our notes have been ready ever since the issue of the people's edition. Meanwhile, our correspondent might read that beautiful book again, and perhaps he will then catch its full meaning without our assistance.

ANNUAL CHILDREN'S EXCURSION.—Miss Vance acknowledges: H. Seal, £1; C. Mascall, 5s.; M. Lovell, 5s.; R. B. Harrison, 1s. 2d.; S. Hartmann, £1; E. Jones, 2s. There is still a deficit on this function, and further donations are requested.

R. CHAPMAN (South Shields).—We regret to hear of the death of Mr. John Lamb, whom we had known for a great many years as a faithful Freethinker. Kindly convey our sympathy to the family.

V. ROGER and T. WILMOT.—Pleased to hear you had a successful evening at the Camberwell Hall on Sunday, and that Mr. Watts was in such good form. We note that thanks are due to Miss Collins for "presiding" at the piano.

C. ANDERSON.—Sorry we cannot tell you the commercial value of your copy of Shakespeare. Illustrated editions are not so much in vogue at present.

M. F. FINDON.—Received. Thanks for your kind attention. Mr. Foote is in perfect health again. The neuralgia was due to a chill, not to microbes.

A. G. LYE.—Sorry we cannot tell you how many Free Libraries accept or buy copies of the *Freethinker*. We have no such list by us, and could not easily make one up. We note your address—89 Vine-street, Coventry—and that you will be glad to hear from any Freethinkers in the town who are willing to co-operate in arranging for the delivery of some lectures.

HARBORNE.—Have put it to the Twentieth Century Fund. Hope you are better.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—W. W. Roberts, 2s.; J. Garven, 10s.; J. Robinson, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Griffiths, 2s.; John Ross, £1; Harborne, 5s.; T. Whiteley, 5s.; J. Phillips, 5s.

EMMA BRADLAUGH.—It is, as you say, regrettable, and sometimes disgusting, to find men who believe in "secular education" deserting it to catch votes and win a seat. What a poor, despicable vanity it must be that leads a man to gain an unpaid public post at the cost of his convictions! He would really be more excusable if his bread-and-better were at stake.

RECEIVED.—Blue Grass Blade—Boston Investigator—Truth-seeker (New York)—Huddersfield Examiner—Two Worlds—Sunday Chronicle—Light—Yorkshire Evening Post—Torch of Reason—Sunderland Echo—Ethical World—Shields Gazette—East Anglican Times—Chatham Observer—Freidenker—Liverpool Echo—Manchester Evening Chronicle.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

LONDON Freethinkers are requested to note that the Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.) will be reopened this evening (Sunday, September 16) for the winter season. The platform will be occupied by Mr. G. W. Foote, who will deliver a special lecture on "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ"—*apropos* of this lady's new and much-talked-of novel entitled *The Master Christian*, in which her "Savior" is reincarnated, and with some reference to her former novel entitled *Barabbas*. The doors will be open at 7 o'clock, and the chair taken at 7.30. Mr. Foote has not lectured in London (or elsewhere) for three months, although he has been busy with the Sunday Freethought Demonstrations in various parts of the metropolis; and there will doubtless be a large audience on this occasion. Friends are asked to give the reopening as much publicity as possible amongst their freethinking and liberal-minded acquaintances.

We beg to call our readers' attention to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, and shall be glad to hear from a large number of persons who will contribute to it in the course of the present year. Collecting-cards and sheets are being prepared, and will be supplied early in October to N.S.S. Branch secretaries and other trustworthy members of the party. Applications for these should be sent to Miss Vance, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C.

Mr. John Downing has set a good example by promptly redeeming his promise to contribute £200 to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. He has forwarded us his cheque for that amount. "I am glad to find," he says in his accompanying letter, "that you are quite recovered, as you are one whose efficient services we always require." We are glad he thinks so. It shows that we do not labor in vain.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Charles Watts had a good audience at the Secular Hall, Camberwell, last Sunday evening, and that he was greeted with an enthusiastic reception. This evening, Sunday, September 16, Mr. Watts again occupies the same platform, taking for his subject: "The Defeat of the Cross." This should evoke an interesting discussion.

The *Chatham Observer* gives an excellent and lengthy report of Mr. Watts's recent lecture in New Brompton on Secularism, and says the "audience listened with evident appreciation."

The Sunday Freethought Demonstrations in London this summer have been very successful. Immense audiences have listened in the London parks, and other open spaces, to the leading speakers of the Freethought party. Those who have been present at any of these gatherings know that our report is true. Still, we are glad to find corroboration in the columns of an important journal like the *British Weekly*. The following letter appeared in the issue of our contemporary for September 6:—

ATHEISTIC LECTURES.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH WEEKLY.

SIR,—May I be allowed, through the columns of your paper, to call the attention of the Christian public to a matter of grave importance, but which seems, nevertheless, to pass unnoticed by the majority of the people? The growth, spread, and success of atheistic lectures in our parks and other public places has of late assumed positively alarming proportions. Only last Sunday I chanced to stroll into Brockwell Park, and my notice was attracted by a huge crowd of listeners to a "demonstration" of the National Secular Society. The audience was composed not only of working men, but also of both sexes of the well-to-do classes. The most painful part of the matter was the applause the infidel demagogues received, and not a word of opposition was offered to their gross misrepresentations and blasphemous caricatures of Christianity.

Such scenes as this are not of infrequent occurrence; and besides the regular secular lectures, these "demonstrations" are held all over the metropolis. Surely it is time for all Christians to unite and endeavor to do something to counteract the

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baneful influence which this atheistic teaching exercises on the people, and especially on the young.—I am, etc.,

VIGILANS.

We do not propose to criticise this writer's adjectives. We merely quote his letter as evidence that we have been telling the plain truth about the success of these Demonstrations. And this success goes beyond the size of the crowd of auditors. A Demonstration is more imposing than a lecture by one person, however eloquent or brilliant. It suggests greater resources. Moreover, it has the advantage of novelty. And every movement has to vary its methods of propaganda in order to avoid the deadliest of all evils, a wearisome feeling of monotony. Fresh efforts arouse fresh enthusiasm in all concerned.

The Birmingham Branch took time by the forelock at the N. S. S. Conference. It procured, with no great difficulty, the carrying of a resolution that a Freethought Demonstration should be held at Birmingham on Sunday, October 21—the use of the great Town Hall having been secured for the occasion. The resolution also declared that the N. S. S. Executive should provide speakers for this Demonstration. It was not suggested how the considerable expense of doing so might be met. That matter was left, as usual, to "providence" in the form of the President. Fortunately, he has not been wanting in practical desire to see this enterprise through. Mr. Foote has determined that the thing, if done at all, should be done in the best style; accordingly, he will attend the Demonstration himself, and take Mr. Watts and Mr. Cohen with him. We do not yet know whether there is to be one meeting or more in the Town Hall. If only the evening meeting is arranged for with the City authorities, it would perhaps be well for Mr. Foote to lecture elsewhere in the morning or afternoon. This would probably help a good deal in paying the N. S. S. expenses.

The Manchester Branch has also written to the President, asking whether a Demonstration can be held in Cottonopolis. And why not? Something seems wanted there to stir up fresh interest. Mr. Foote has requested the Manchester secretary (Mrs. Pegg) to ascertain what large central hall would be available for such a gathering.

The Leicester Secular Society, having spent the £500 raised in 1893, is now endeavoring to raise another £500. Probably the Bazaar will realise a considerable proportion of this sum, but donations will also be needed; and Mr. F. J. Gould, on behalf of the Committee, is appealing for support to the Twentieth Anniversary Fund. We note that the Gimson family are well to the front in the subscription-list up to date, and that Mr. Sydney A. Gimson has promised to give £100 when the remaining £400 is subscribed, or to add one quarter to any less sum collected. The institution at Leicester is one that deserves all the assistance that can possibly be rendered it. In the course of time, no doubt, England will be studded with such homes of Secularism. Meanwhile, those who have no opportunity of contributing towards the maintenance of one in their own locality might do a great deal worse with any money they have to spare than by sending it on to help the one which is bravely and usefully kept going at Leicester. Address: Mr. F. J. Gould, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate.

The Glasgow Branch favors us with a copy of its Annual Report for 1899-1900, which is a healthy, encouraging document. In spite of the war, which has absorbed so much public attention, the work of the Branch has been well sustained, and audiences have been larger than might have been expected in the circumstances. "The past session," as the report justly says, "was one in which to lose nothing was to gain much." Financially, the Branch is in a very prosperous condition, thanks to a "Christmas Box" of £100 from an anonymous donor. "Never in the history of the Society," we read, "has it finished its financial year with such a substantial balance in hand." This is a most hardworking Branch, and we are pleased to see that its labors are attended with success.

By the way, it is not Secular Societies only that have suffered from the public interest in the South African war. All "advanced" movements, and a good many others, have had a similar experience. We see that the Birmingham Sunday Lecture Society, for instance, reports a considerable falling off in attendance, while a favorable balance has been turned into a deficit. We are not congratulating Secularists on such facts, but merely pointing out that the disadvantages of the past year have been due to general causes.

Mr. C. Cohen is holding a special meeting this morning (Sept. 16) at Stratford Grove. He will lecture at 11.30 on "The Bible and Board Schools." Local "saints" please note.

In the afternoon, at 3.15, Mr. Cohen delivers his last lecture for the season in Victoria Park. No doubt his friends will flock round him in large numbers on this occasion.

Mr. Wilmot reports that the September series of lectures on Clapham Common have thus far been fairly successful. On the first Sunday the Secularists were regarded as intruders; on the second Sunday they were taken as a matter of course, although some C. E. S. people shouted themselves hoarse at a small opposition meeting. Mr. Cohen was the lecturer.

Messrs. Watts & Co. are publishing what seems to be an important work by Haeckel, the great German evolutionist, on *The Riddle of the Universe*. We don't know that there *is* a riddle; or that, if there is, Haeckel has solved it; but what he writes on the subject is sure to be full of interest and information. An advertisement of this work will be found on another page of this week's *Freethinker*.

Brockwell Park audiences are generally very orderly, but there was a disturbance at Mr. Heaford's meeting on Sunday afternoon. A clique of well-dressed Christian rowdies did their best to drown his voice by shouting, booing, and giving "Three cheers for Jesus." In the end they succeeded, unintentionally, in getting a tremendous audience for the lecturer. Thanks are due to the park-keepers for the prompt manner in which they dealt with one or two of the ringleaders.

A good many friends have sent us the names and addresses of newsagents who are able and willing to display a weekly contents-sheet of the *Freethinker*, which we dispatch to them by post on Wednesday evenings. We are still anxious, however, to obtain more such names and addresses. We therefore beg all who can help us in this respect to do so forthwith. It is not a very difficult matter for those of our readers who buy their weekly copy of the *Freethinker* of a newsagent to ask him whether he will display a contents-sheet if it is forwarded to him. There is no doubt whatever that the striking headlines on this placard are of great use in exciting attention and curiosity, and consequently in promoting the sale of the paper.

Wonder and Reason in Man.

THE fact abides that the great mass of supernatural beliefs which have persisted from the lower culture till now, and which are still held by an overwhelming majority of civilised mankind, are referable to causes concomitant with man's mental development—causes operative throughout his history. The low intellectual environment of his barbaric past was constant for thousands of years, and his adaptation thereto was complete.....Man wondered countless ages before he reasoned; because feeling travels along the line of least resistance, while thought, or the challenge by inquiry—therefore the assumption that there may be two sides to a question—must pursue a path obstructed by the dominance of custom, the force of imitation, and the strength of prejudice and fear. It is here that anthropology, notably that psychical branch of it comprehended under folk-lore, takes up the cue from the momentous doctrine of heredity; explains the persistence of the primitive, and the causes of man's tardy escape from the illusions of the senses, and the general conservatism of human nature. "Born into life, in vain, opinions, those or these, unalter'd to retain the obstinate mind decrees," as in the striking illustration cited in Heine's *Travel-Pictures*: "A few years ago Bullock dug up an ancient stone idol in Mexico, and the next day he found that he had been crowned during the night with flowers. And yet the Spaniard had exterminated the old Mexican religion with fire and sword, and for three centuries had been engaged in ploughing and harrowing their minds and implanting the seed of Christianity." The causes of error, delusion, and of the spiritual nightmare of olden time, being made clear, there is begotten a generous sympathy with that which empirical notions of human nature attributed to wilfulness or to man's fall from a high estate. Superstitions which are the outcome of ignorance can awaken only pity. Where the corrective of knowledge is absent, we see that it could not be otherwise. Where that corrective is present, but either perverted or not exercised, pity is supplanted by blame. In either case, we learn that the art of life largely consists in that control of the emotions and that diversion of them into wholesome channels which the intellect, braced with the latest knowledge, alone can effect.

—*Edward Clodd, "The Pioneers of Evolution."*

Obituary.

SOUTH SHIELDS.—On Sunday last Mr. John Lamb, for many years newsagent, and one of the oldest members of the above Branch, died at his residence, 82 West Walpole-street, High Shields. Deceased was a well-known figure at all local lectures and meetings, and was highly respected.—R. CHAPMAN.

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Elusive Pietists.

Not more than a casual dip into the religious literature of our time is necessary to convince us that a remarkable change has taken place in the matter of Christian tactics. Everywhere we find attempts, more or less disingenuous, to throw new light on old nonsense, in the hope of preserving at least some remnants of the ancient faith. Pietists are no longer concerned to defend much of that for which their forefathers professed themselves ready to die. Venerable doctrines which were supposed to be of vital importance to saving faith have been quietly abandoned. Biblical history has been subjected to new forms of interpretation, whereby its accuracy has been of necessity impugned in the vain endeavor to make it acceptable in another sense to the spirit and knowledge of the age. Views of the present life and of futurity have undergone a process of broadening which would have made believers in the earlier centuries stare in absolute amaze. In nothing so much as in Christian belief do we find an exemplification of the fact that the "old order of things changeth."

The influences that have brought about this change must be evident to every unprejudiced observer. They have not arisen in the Christian Church itself. They have operated from outside. They are the outcome of the independent and intrepid thought of heretics whom the Church persecuted with remorseless malignity, and whose memory it slanders and reviles to this day. Modern criticism and scientific discovery have furnished some additional weapons, but their results are not more effective than those which were employed a century or two ago. The surprising thing is to notice how largely the old arsenal is drawn upon by "advanced" believers to-day, who, either from ignorance or forgetfulness or an absurd pretence of dignity, fail to acknowledge the source to which they are indebted. When will the Christian Church rise to some sense of honor and honesty, and do justice—tardy though it be—to Voltaire and Paine and Carlile, not to mention some modern and still living pioneers whom she did her best to martyrise by terms of imprisonment which will stand in history to her everlasting disgrace?

These heretics have proved, not only by their self-sacrifice, but by unexampled magnanimity, the honesty and integrity of their ideas. Can the same be said of Christians who are now profiting by that heroism, which, by the way, is not altogether of the past, because religious prejudice still necessitates its display? We think not; for the attitude and the methods of modern "advanced" Christians leave much to be desired. To put it broadly and colloquially, believers of this class are playing a double game. They are trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. They cannot really accept the Bible and many Church doctrines founded thereon, and yet they protest, with a sort of righteous indignation, against any suspicion that they are unbelievers. But, of course, they are unbelievers, whether they openly admit it or not. We do not want to claim them. We disown them. If they lack the courage of their opinions, let them remain nominal Christians. They are better suited to that camp than to ours, where at least there is no inducement to be dishonest.

Very amusing it would be—if it were not for the displeasure one always feels at dissimulation—to note their efforts to reconcile the irreconcileable, to appear faithful when they are in reality sceptical, to exhibit a reverence which they do not, and cannot, possess; to affect assent when their utterances, if they mean anything at all, breathe vital dissent; to cloak their heresy by the use of terminology which, from their mouths and with their ideas, is utterly misleading. They are traitors—both to Christianity and Freethought—tergiversators, time-servers, jelly-fish, hermaphrodites—anything you like to call them which conveys the idea of those weak and erratic, not to say hypocritical, people whom John Bunyan collectively described in Mr. Facing-Both-Ways.

In a recent article we gave some remarkable instances of elusive pietism from a newly-published work, *The Dawn of Revelation*. A presiding member of the Mothers' Union took grave exception to that book. And no wonder, especially as it is being used as a kind of text-book for schools. The authoress—for it is a lady who has written it—replied to the criticism in a spirited fashion, and was effective enough in supporting her rejection of miracles, more particularly those of the Old Testament. But nothing could be weaker than her claim of Divine origin for the remainder of that book and of the New Testament. In the *Church Times*, in which a notice of the book originally appeared, there were published last week three letters from correspondents who seem to have been deeply moved. One writer controverts her statement that her disbelief in the historical accuracy of the traditional narratives is shared by almost all thinking Christians of the present day. "Were it possible for the opinion of all thinking Christians of the present day to be taken, it would probably be found that the number in agreement with your correspondent is not nearly so large as she assumes it to be." We will not pretend to decide this question. The word "thinking" somewhat qualifies the statement as to Christians generally, but then there are a great many Christians who may be described as "thinking," but whose thinking is all in one direction—limited to an area which does not comprise Rationalistic theories and ideas. The critic of the *Dawn of Revelation* continues:—

> "Does it not occur to her [the authoress] that she has on her side the opponents of Christianity as well? Has she never read, for instance, the works of the famous Deistic writers of the last century, or the answers to their attacks on the Bible, proceeding from thinking Christians such as Leland, Watson, Charles Leslie, and others? It is really interesting to compare the productions of the eighteenth-century Deists with those of the new school of Biblical critics. To take a single example, the miracle of the manna in the wilderness is a case in point. Both in the *Dawn of Revelation* and in Paine's *Age of Reason* the miracle is dismissed as untrue. The reasons given are different. But what is the difference in the result?"

One does not see how the cause of revelation is assisted by the citation of Leland, Watson, and Leslie, who were palpably ineffective in their time, and are now quite out of date. It is true that the *Dawn of Revelation* disposes differently from the *Age of Reason* of the miraculous manna, and in this instance modern criticism may be said to have progressed or rather deviated. But to what purpose? The author says:—

> "The beautiful story of the manna is most likely an allegorical way of expressing how God gave them day by day their daily bread. Manna is found in various parts of the Sinaitic desert, but it does not fall from heaven, but exudes from the resinous shrubs which grew in some of the mountains."

This is, indeed, a "beautiful" way of explaining what is *not* a "beautiful allegory," but the record of what was obviously regarded as a miracle. The narrative will be found in Exodus xvi. Suppose the manna to exude naturally from the resinous shrubs, how does the author explain verses 26 and 27: "Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none"?

It is easy enough to rationalise and explain away Scriptural stories if you elect to pay not the slightest attention to the text. The "beautiful allegory" salve is humbug. Who is to say what is meant as allegory and what as matter of fact?

The Rev. Algernon C. Lucey, rector of Westmeston Rectory, Hassocks, who writes the second letter to the *Church Times*, seems quite delighted with the *Dawn of Revelation*. He says:—

> "The sooner we clergy realise that what the present age requires is the re-presenting of religion, the better it will be for us and religion. It is most difficult for us to shake ourselves free from old-fashioned prejudices and knowledge, and to know how to acquire sound methods. This the author of the *Dawn of Revelation* helps us to do with regard to the Bible, and I only hope the rising generation may be better instructed than the past in the true position of the Bible in the sphere of God's providence."

Another writer—"Leba"—suggests that the results of the Higher Criticism should be gradually instilled into the minds of children—not all at once, but bit by bit. Children, he says, "accept the facts of the Bible

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so absolutely that I am sure there is a real danger of moral upheaval and great unsettlement if parents allow them to remain too long in ignorance of present-day controversies."

So much for the controversy on the *Dawn of Revelation*. In this connection, one may add a word about a new book called *Catholic Evolution*, by N. E. Egerton Swann, B.A., Oxford. We know what a stumbling block to teetotallers that miracle of Christ at the wedding feast at Cana has always been. The author of *Catholic Evolution* solemnly suggests that the guests were "hypnotised," and deluded into thinking they were drinking wine! No doubt, there is delusion somewhere; either it must have been with those who thought they drank wine miraculously made from water, or it is with those who believe the naked, bald story as it stands in the New Testament. No good comes from these attempts, however ingenious, to rationalise the Bible miracles. In most cases the plain meaning of the text is dead against the attempted explanation.

Francis Neale.

The Sleep of Death.

A Cue from Shakespeare.

Shakespeare, the supreme genius of literature, has told us that "our little life is rounded with a sleep." The materialistic similitude of death to sleep is a thought which appears to have possessed a peculiar fascination for great writers, ancient and modern, but more particularly for Shakespeare, whom it always prompts to utterances of more than usual sublimity. With this sublimity is mingled a touch of simple pathos which strikes home to every heart, as, for example, in the saying: "Tired we sleep, and life's poor play is o'er."

Sleep! All that the human fancy can conceive of refreshing and delightful is assuredly comprised in that gentle monosyllable. Poets in all ages and in all countries have sung its praises; but of all panegyrics ever uttered on this enchanting theme the most truthful and striking is probably that which fell from the lips of Sancho Panza: "Sleep! It covers a man all over, thoughts and all, like a cloak. It is meat for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, heat for the cold, and cold for the hot."

William Hazlitt, a fine author unduly neglected, is never more magnificent than in writing on this subject. His essay on the *Fear of Death* shows the extent of his freethought. To die, he there discourses, is only to be as we were before we were born; yet no one feels any remorse, or regret, or repugnance, in contemplating this last idea. "It seems to have been holiday-time with us then. We were not called to appear on the stage of life, to wear robes and tatters, to laugh or cry, be toasted or applauded. We had lain *perdus* all this while—snug, out of harm's way—and had slept out our thousands of centuries without wanting to be waked up; at peace and free from care in a long nonage, in a sleep deeper and calmer than that of infancy, wrapped in the softest and finest dust."

"Rounded with a sleep! These words created whole volumes in me," says Jean Paul Richter, acknowledging the power of the master-mind of Shakespeare.

De Quincey, a very unequal, if powerful, writer, is uniformly sublime when he treats of this subject. At a bound he reaches something like Shakespearean splendor of imagination. What is life? asks Thomas De Quincey, and answers, Darkness and formless vacancy for a beginning, then next a dim lotos of human consciousness afloat upon the waters, then a few smiles and tears, a little love and infinite strife, dust and ashes, and once more darkness circling round, rounding or making an island of our fantastic existence.

It is of Prospero's metaphor of this sleep-rounded life of ours that Mr. Andrew Lang writes in his fine poem on *Omar Khayyam*:—

> So still were we before the months began
> That rounded us and shaped us into man.
> So still we shall be, surely, at the last,
> Dreamless, un'ouched of blessing or of ban.

This philosophy of life and death must not be thought identical with the Mephistophelean:—

> A life of nothings, nothing worth,
> From that first nothing ere his birth
> To that last nothing under earth.

This is pure intellectual nihilism, such as Byron introduced to relieve the sardonic laughter of his most cynical poem:—

> Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
> 'Twixt night and morn upon the horizon's verge;
> How little do we know that which we are,
> How less what we may be!

Shelley, in the opening lines of his *Queen Mab*, speaks of death and sleep being brothers. But most of all does Shelley look on death with longing and audacity in his great dirge *Adonais*. The dead are "made one with nature." Dante, under the dominion of mediæval superstition, leads us in his *Divine Comedy* to the grinning death's head of the charnel house. Calderon, whose genius was hampered by Catholicism, regards death as the brink of a possible penal abyss—for heretics. Even Milton is alternately filled with a narrow Puritan and unreal classical sense of death. But Shakespeare is beyond them all. Beyond a ghastly imaginary Styx; beyond priestly mummery, the hateful hell, the painful purgatory, the paltry paradise of Christian thought; beyond the absurd judgment day and the reign of Puritan saints. Death with him is perfectly natural and allied to sleep, "nature's gentle nurse."

Rationalism dictated Shakespeare's noblest thoughts and richest fancies, and wherever his mighty genius soars above all rivals it has been inspired by a sane philosophy.

Lucretius, that grand old Roman Freethinker, has a long passage in the third book of his immortal poem, perhaps of more sustained depth and solemnity than any other he has written, in which he endeavors to "fight the fear of death" by considerations founded on its deep, insensible, and uncomplaining rest. Lucretius writes as one who had a heart to feel the priceless blessings of life, and who knew and valued the truest source of happiness to man. Very tender and touching, and rising into far purer regions than the atmosphere of his time, is the feeling of the lines of this old-world Secularist. Nowhere could the human heart find words of support so strong and so grandly earnest.

From the dreamy East, Omar Khayyam says the same thing as Lucretius. Both have the same message; but whilst Lucretius sings with an earnest and grave content, Omar chants it in lines of passionate bitterness. The highest minds of bygone ages were fortified by the same philosophy.

Freethought everywhere destroys the terror of death. The Secularist is aware of the truth that death is but an incident of life. He no longer allows the tomb to cast its chill shadow over the pleasure of life. He lives without hypocrisy, and when the time comes he dies without fear—

> Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
> About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

Mimnermus.

A Mad Prophetess.

A Madrid telegram says: "A terrible drama has just been enacted at Algaiba, in Murcia, with a mad prophetess as its central figure. She is a young peasant woman of twenty-four, named Teresa Guillen, who took to prophecy and preaching several months ago, and after stirring up many disorderly pilgrimages, was locked up as a religious maniac. A fortnight ago she was allowed to return home, and once more crowds began to assemble, spell-bound by the impassioned ecstasy of her harangues. Last Thursday she was preaching before a large concourse of people, when five gendarmes arrived to arrest her. The ignorant peasants, worked upon by the wild appeals of the sibyl, attacked the police with fury, and in the fight which ensued four of the gendarmes were mortally wounded, while sixteen persons in the crowd were seriously hurt. The woman's father and brother were killed."

Cardinal Manning went one day to his publishers for a copy of a book of his own, *Confidence in God*. The order was shouted down to the stock-room, whence came the reply: "Manning's *Confidence in God* all gone."—*Clarion*.

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Behind the Veil.

THERE is no more curious study than the different ways in which the differing minds of men approach the dark veil hanging before each of them—the mystery which we call death. The great classical scholar, Porson, was chiefly terrified by the certainty that he could not carry with him the learning which had cost him so dear.

"Forty years I have given to the study of Greek," he is reported to have said. "And what if they do not speak Greek there beyond?"

A German writer says: "To go through the portal of death is like a horse passing into a low barn-door. All superfluous packages on his back are scraped off and left behind."

"To die, to sleep," says Hamlet. "To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub!"

Among the philosophic Asiatics so great is the repugnance to this dread, unsolvable problem that it is never mentioned by name. No one says that his neighbor is dead, but that he "has gone away—has saluted the world."

Men of cheerful temperament have thrown the reflection of their pleasant thoughts even beyond the verge of the great darkness. Charles Lamb, to whom home and friends were dearer than to most men, asks wistfully: "Sun and sky, and breeze.....and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields .....and fireside conversations and innocent vanities and jests.....do these things go out with life? Can a ghost laugh.....when you are pleasant with him?"

Hardly a man lives who is not afraid of death, yet every man once in each day falls without fear into a state of temporary death, the mystery of which no physician can adequately explain.

An Unverified Uprising of Citizens.

THE Ascension is not mentioned by Matthew, Mark, and John. Luke says simply that Jesus, in blessing his disciples at Bethany, was parted from them and carried up into heaven, and in the Acts of the Apostles it is asserted that "he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight."

This miraculous disappearance was not any more wonderful than his miraculous appearing and disappearing at his several meetings with his disciples; but, if such a thing had really happened, it would not only have been noted down with minuteness by all the lookers-on, but it would have been known and commented upon by outsiders.

The question of immortality is one of equal interest to the whole race, and the chief priests and the Roman governor would have been as glad as anyone else to be assured that a man had really risen from the dead. Just here comes in the testimony of Matthew's gospel, that "many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many."

Whatever degree of prejudice might have prevented the enemies of Jesus from believing in such assertions respecting him, there was nothing to hinder the recognition of that company of resuscitated citizens, and the promulgation of the glad tidings of their continued existence.

Such an event would have been heralded over the whole known world, and could never have been forgotten by secular history. Yet, beyond that daring assertion of Matthew, there is not a word in any record, and the phenomenon appears to have left no trace among the witnesses.

—*From "The Christ Myth," by Elizabeth E. Evans.*

What is a Miracle?

THE lawyer asked the witness if the incident previously alluded to wasn't a miracle, and the witness said he didn't know what a miracle was.

"Oh, come!" said the attorney. "Supposing you were looking out of a window in the twelfth storey of a building, and should fall out and should not be injured. What would you call that?"

"An accident," was the stolid reply.

"Yes, yes; but suppose you were doing the same thing the next day! Suppose you looked out of the twelfth-storey window and fell out, and again should find yourself not injured. What would you call that?"

"A coincidence," said the witness.

"Oh, come now," the lawyer began again. "I want you to understand what a miracle is, and I'm sure you do. Just suppose that on the third day you were looking out of the twelfth storey window, and fell out and struck your head on the pavement twelve stories below, and were not in the least injured. What would you call it?"

"Three times?" said the witness, rousing a little from his apathy. "Well, I'd call that a habit." And then the lawyer gave it up.

Just Like Their Elders.

THE Episcopal Bishop Anderson has a daughter of four. The other day the family entertained some friends from Denver. In the visiting family there was a little girl of the same age as the Anderson child. Her family were Presbyterians. It was proposed that the two little girls share the same bed, which was assented to by the children. When bed-time came, they both knelt down to say their prayers in unison.

When little Miss Anderson was saying, "Forgive us our trespasses," she heard her companion say, "Forgive us our debts," and she said, sharply:—

"It's 'trespasses!'"

"No it ain't," said the Denver Calvinist. "It's 'debts.'"

"Trespasses!"

"Debts!"

"Trespasses!"

"Debts!"

Out flew a chubby Anderson fist which struck a Presbyterian eye. There was a mixup immediately.

"Now it's 'trespasses,' ain't it?"

"No," said she, stoutly. "It's 'debts.'"

Peace was restored, and the two consented to go on with the prayer. When they came to the end, the little Presbyterian said "Amen," giving the flat "a" of the Dissenters, while the little Episcopalian intoned "Ah-men," with the broad sound to the first vowel.

"Amen," repeated the Presbyterian.

"Ah-men," said Miss Anderson, with conviction.

They were only saved from another encounter by being bundled into bed. As the door was closed upon them, each was still maintaining her idea of pronunciation.

—*Chicago Chronicle.*

Ingersoll on Clover.

THE late Colonel Ingersoll once sent the following letter of regret in answer to an invitation to dinner by the Clover Club:—

"I regret that it is impossible for me to be in 'clover' with you to-morrow, first anniversary dinner, 1883. A wonderful thing is 'clover.' It means honey and cream—that is to say, industry and contentment; that is to say, the happy bees in perfumed fields—and at the cottage gate 'Old Boss,' the bountiful, serenely chewing satisfaction's cud in that blessed twilight pause that, like a benediction, falls between all toil and sleep. This clover makes me dream of happy hours, of childhood's rosy cheeks, of dimpled babes, of wholesome, loving wives, of honest men, of springs and brooks and violets, and all there is of stainless joy in peaceful human life.

"A wonderful word is 'clover.' Drop the 'c,' and you have the happiest of mankind. Take away the 'c' and 'r,' and you have left the only thing that makes a heaven of this dull and barren earth. Cut off the 'r' alone, and there remains a very deceitful bud that sweetens the breath and keeps peace in countless homes whose masters frequent clubs. After all, Bottom was right, 'Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.'

"ROBERT G. INGERSOLL."

Pious Pompey's Plea.

I STOLE dem breeches, I 'knowledge de corn,
But 'twarn't no crime, ezsho's you're born!
Ef de motive is right, den whar's de sin?
I stole dem breeches ter be baptize' in.

Fur my onliest pa'r wuz clean wored out,
Dey gib up der ghos' when I 'gun ter shout;
But r'ligion is mighty en mus' pervail,
Do' it lan' er darkey in de county jail.

De chain gang's got me en de coal mines too,
But what could er 'fenseless colored man do
When de jedge en jury lowed it wuz sin
Ter steal dem breeches ter be baptize' in.

Tell de folks all howdy en good-bye too,
I'll meet 'em in hebben when my wuck is fru,
Fur my heart is white do' my skin is black,
En I'm gwine ter trabbel de shinin' track.

When de Lawd is jedge, I kno' he gwine say,
"Pomp's straight ez er shingle en fair ez de day."
He'll shout ter de worl' dat it 'twa'n't no sin
Ter steal dem breeches ter be baptize' in.

—*Truthseeker* (New York). BELLE R. HARRISON.

According to the Bishop of Ripon, who has been preaching at Bradford in view of the meeting of the British Association, we must all "be crucified in Jesus Christ." A good many people would be glad to be crucified like this smug preacher. A sure job, a big salary, and a handsome residence make a very desirable "cross."

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Watts, "The Defeat of the Cross."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A. B. Moss.
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, W. J. Ramsey.
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, E. Pack.
CLAPHAM COMMON: 3.15, F. A. Davies.
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.
HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, F. A. Davies.
KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, E. White.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, E. Pack.
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 11, C. Cohen, "The Education Question"; 7.30, A. B. Moss.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford; 7.15, F. A. Davies. September 19, at 8.15, C. Cohen.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A. B. Moss.
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. Percy Ward—11 (in the Bull Ring); 7 (Prince of Wales' Assembly Rooms, Broad-street). For subjects see Saturday's *Daily Mail*.
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, A lecture.
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, D. Black, "Is there a God?" 6.30, J. F. Turnbull, "Why I am a Secularist."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, L. Bergmann, B.Sc., "Marcus Aurelius."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday evening.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Adjourned subject, "Industrial Problems."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—September 16, m., Stratford Grove; a., Victoria Park. 23, m., Ridley-road, Kingsland; a., Clapham Common.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—September 16, m., Battersea; e., West Ham. 26, a., Victoria Park. October 7, a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—September 16, Birmingham. 24 and October 1, Debate in Birmingham. December 9, Glasgow.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—September 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 38. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Priest and the Child.

ONCE every three years the people, or, to be quite accurate, a small proportion of them, awaken to the fact that there is an educational problem afoot, and that it becomes them, as citizens, to take some share in its solution. This year, owing to the threatened proximity of a Parliamentary election, the interest, so far as London is concerned, promises to be even weaker than usual. More's the pity; for, though the Parliamentary election creates the greatest interest, and brings a larger number of voters to the poll, it by no means follows that it is therefore the most important. For my part, I am inclined to regard the School Board elections as the more important of the two. If Parliament lays down laws for the general government of schools, it is the schools that determine the mental calibre of our legislators, and for that reason alone these should demand the most serious attention of all reformers.

And of all the questions in connection with our scheme of public education that can engage the attention of earnest thinkers, that of the maintenance of the Bible in, or its rejection from, the public schools takes a foremost position. For this is not merely a question of a struggle between rival Christian sects, nor even of a contest between Christianity at large and its avowed enemies. It is far more a question of the initial bent that is to be given to the child's mind, of whether the teacher is to have a free hand in the imparting of such instruction as all sections of the community are agreed upon as being essential, or whether he shall be for a portion of his working time the passive tool of church and chapel, indoctrinating his charges with views that future knowledge can but disturb, and a large portion of which is already rejected by numbers of educated men and women. It is in school that the child receives the stamp of its future intellectual life; it is to the teacher that it looks with trust and confidence for information; and it is nothing less than a crime against its whole nature, and against the welfare of the race, to force upon it beliefs which it is bound to modify as years pass, or to train it with an eye to its becoming a member of church or chapel rather than to its playing a useful part in the society to which it belongs.

To my mind it is a mere truism to say that, by leaving education to the control of the clergy, Dissenting or Established, we are striking a deadly blow at our hopes of a higher national life. Such a statement is not made without a basis in hard and bitter experience. The mere fact that the movement for popular education is essentially a modern one is, in itself, enough to shatter clerical pretensions in the matter. Had the Churches ever taken the question of education seriously to heart, the people who had covered the land with churches might equally as well have covered it with schools. But, far from that being the case, even the few Grammar schools and Foundation schools that had been opened were gradually appropriated by the upper classes, leaving the mass of the people, as late as the close of the last century, practically destitute of educational opportunities. And when the lead for a general educational movement to be undertaken by the State came, it originated, not with any of the Churches, but with the French Revolutionary writers, nearly all of whom were filled with the conviction that a democracy, to be stable, must be educated, and that education was a far too important matter to be left to the vagaries of private charity or individual initiative.

To Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, is usually given the credit of initiating a wide scheme of popular education in this country at the beginning of the century—a circumstance constantly dwelt upon by Dissenters, who conveniently forget that he had for a firm friend Robert Owen, who declared that religions were only different forms of geographical insanities, and who helped Lancaster with both money and advice, one contribution alone being a cheque for a thousand pounds.* It is not quite clear to my mind how far Lancaster's action was dominated by religious propagandism and how much by educational zeal; but it is clear that when the National Society, representing the Church interest, was established, it was in the interests of religion, with education playing a bad second.

For the first seventy years of this century elementary education was practically controlled by the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society—the opposing camps of church and chapel—lamely patronised during the latter portion of the period by the State. During this time it is easy to see that, while the competition of the two bodies was the direct cause of whatever improvement was made in the schools under their control, this competition was inspired not by any educational zeal, but by the desire to attract children in order to secure them as adult members of their respective churches or chapels. There were, of course, to be found men whose devotion to the cause of education was of a more single-minded character, but in the main the school was the morsel with which the religious hook was baited; and, so long as the fish was landed, the clergy paid but small attention to whether the schools were a good introduction to the duties of citizenship or not.

Only gradually did people begin to recognise the danger of allowing such an important matter as education to continue at the mercy of sectarian rivalries. Time, however, has a knack of teaching when all other methods have failed, and the steady insistence of palpable facts overcame even the sluggishness of the general public. Helped by the labors of Owen, Bentham, Mill, and the early *Westminster Review* group generally; moved by the fact that, after fifty years of religious rule in such important centres as Manchester and Liverpool, fifty per cent. of the children were either not receiving instruction at all or getting only what was a mere parody on the name, and that elsewhere, as inspectors reported, "of four-fifths of the children about to leave school either no account or an unsatisfactory one is given by an examination of the most strictly elementary kind," public feeling on the matter grew until the Government was driven to take definite action, which resulted in the Act of 1870.

From one aspect, the passing of that Act registered the inadequacy of the schools under religious control. From another point of view, it was a great triumph for the cause of Secularism. The Act asserted, as it was bound to assert, the primary importance of secular instruction; and, had the wishes of many of its promoters been carried into effect, the public schools would have been wholly secular from beginning to end. But the churches were strong, and Mr. Gladstone was in power. Instead of the Government of the day carrying

* Owen also offered, a little later, the same sum to the Church schools if they were opened to children of all denominations, but only half that sum if they were excluded. The proposal was debated for two days, and finally the smaller sum was accepted and Dissenters shut out.

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into effect the principle of religious equality, and severing the State and the State schools from all connection with religion or religious teaching bodies, the very men who had assisted at the disestablishment of the Irish Church gave the English Churches what practically was a new form of endowment, and presented them with a new platform from which to teach their dogmas. A compromise was effected; a good one for church and chapel, a poor one so far as the general public were concerned. Instead of the religious schools being left to their own devices, arrangements were made by which a sum of money, amounting at present to about four millions annually, was taken from the general public and handed over to what are avowedly sectarian institutions, and which are kept open solely in the interests of a sectarian religion. It was a new form of endowment thinly disguised—an endowment in its most objectionable form.

But it is the famous fourteenth section of the Act, which regulates religious instruction in the Board schools themselves, and which provides that "No religious formulary or religious catechism which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school," that has proved the source of endless contention, and which will continue to cause trouble until it is swept on one side. There has been continuous quarrelling, because the clause was fundamentally illogical. This was pointed out during the course of the debate by Sir W. Harcourt, Sir Stafford Northcote, Mr. Disraeli, and many others, and the force and truthfulness of the criticism was fully admitted by both Mr. Forster and Mr. Gladstone. But the sects had to be appeased, the clause became law, and the interests of education were once more sacrificed to the interests of church and chapel. Not only was the clause ridiculous as it stood, but in the nature of the case it could satisfy no one for any length of time. It could only exist so long as no one religious body was strong enough to set it on one side in its own interests. It has always been the weakest religious body that has professed the greatest fondness for it, and their attachment has weakened as they found their power growing.

What, after all, does the compromise amount to? In a word, it is a compromise between a number of religious bodies, with designs on the public purse, and the public conscience, each one anxious to rule the roost in the interests of their own church or chapel, but agreeing to share the plunder because no single one is strong enough to commit the depredation single-handed. Not one of the religious bodies has any objection to definite religious instruction, only they each object to it being anybody's religion but their own. But none of them were strong enough, nor are they strong enough now, to get their own form of faith selected and all others excluded. Had they each fought for their own hand, it would have meant secular education right off, and that, as Cardinal Manning said, "dooms religion to gradual extinction." Under those circumstances, half a loaf was better than none at all, and as long as the Bible was in the schools it was a great point gained; each trusted, like so many theological Micawbers, for something favorable to turn up.

Such a compromise was bound to be a prolific cause of trouble. It completely satisfied none; it was deliberately unjust to many. It was a compromise between *Christian* bodies, and ignored all other classes of the community. It compelled Atheists, Jews, and all orders of non-Christians to pay towards the teaching of a religion in which none of them believed. It taught the religion of a few with money raised from the taxation of all. And, in perpetrating this act of social injustice, the Dissenter is more blameworthy than the Churchman. The Churchman believes it is the duty of the State to teach religion, and is only logical in wishing to keep it in State schools. The Dissenter denies the right of the State to teach religion to adults, but insists on it being taught to children. What is the difference between the two cases? Dissenters submit that it is unjust to compel them to pay towards the support of a Church they do not believe in. I agree with them in their contention; but is it less unjust to compel non-Christians to pay for the teaching of a religion in which they do not believe? Will not every argument that holds good against the payment of church rates by Dissenters hold equally good against the payment of school rates by Freethinkers, a portion of which is used in teaching a creed they do not believe in? There are two answers to such an objection. The first is, the number of Freethinkers is small. I am not sure of that, and do not know how anyone else can be sure of that either. But suppose it were so; because only a few suffer under an injustice it is none the less an injustice. The question of numbers has no place in the discussion. The whole question is a simple one: it is whether it is right to tax people indiscriminately to support a set of speculative doctrines, which may be right or which may be wrong, but which many of those who are taxed believe to be both false and injurious. To that question there can be but one sound answer.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Secular Organisation.

A SPECIAL meeting of the National Secular Society's Executive met on Thursday evening, September 13, to consider a certain scheme of which I gave notice at the previous ordinary meeting on the last Thursday in August. This scheme had been carefully thought out, and I had no doubt that it would be, at least substantially, approved by the Executive. A long discussion took place, and some slight amendments were incorporated. The scheme as finally agreed upon is as follows, in the form of a many-claused resolution:—

That, in view of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund now being raised, it is resolved by this Executive of the National Secular Society, subject to the concurrence of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited:—

(1) That the limited propagandist force of the Secular movement has been, and still is, very largely wasted by sporadic action, each lecturer making his own engagements and visiting places at haphazard, without respect to whether his work has been preceded or will be followed by that of others.

(2) That continuity of effort in definite places, or over definite areas, would be both far less expensive and far more fruitful.

(3) That where such continuity of effort already exists, it should as far as possible be consistently promoted.

(4) That the power now expended on desultory work should be concentrated in the interest of effectiveness.

(5) That a first attempt at concentration be made in London, where nearly six millions of people are assembled together on a comparatively accessible and workable area.

(6) That the President be requested and authorised to organise this attempt for a trial period of six months, with such assistance as he may require from the Secretary, and with the co-operation of a special sub-committee of the Executive, consisting of four members, two of whom shall be members of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited.

(7) That all expenditure under this head shall, as usual, be transacted by the Secretary and the Treasurer who shall, also as usual, keep and file accounts of the same.

(8) That, in order to furnish the necessary services for this attempt in London, Messrs. C. Watts and C. Cohen be engaged at a weekly salary of £3 and £2 10s. respectively; in consideration for which it shall be understood that they hold themselves in readiness to lecture or attend meetings in London, on Sundays or week-days, under the directions of the President and the sub-committee.

(9) That Messrs. A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, and perhaps other lecturers, as may be found necessary or desirable, shall be engaged from time to time, and remunerated according to circumstances.

(10) That a special feature should be made of the sale and free distribution of Freethought literature at all meetings.

(11) That if this attempt in London succeeds, or shows reasonable promise of success, the N. S. S. Executive, with the concurrence of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, will endeavor to take steps for extending operations on the same lines in other parts of the country; working one district after another—such as South Wales and the West of England, the Midlands, the Eastern Counties, Yorkshire, Lancashire, the Tyneside, South-West Scotland, and East Scotland, including Edinburgh, Dundee, and Aberdeen.

(12) That in the meanwhile the lecturers engaged under this scheme may be permitted to visit provincial towns where continuity of work exists, and that the payment to be made by the Branches for the lecturers' services shall be adjusted as favorably as possible to such Branches.

A special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, was held subsequently, and concurrence in the scheme as adopted by the N. S. S.

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Executive was resolved upon unanimously. Both bodies are therefore in absolute agreement.

Let me here say, in passing, that this scheme will not absorb more than about one-third of the amount already subscribed or promised towards the Twentieth Century Fund; and the proportion will be considerably less by the time this Fund is definitely closed.

For a long time I have seen that, unless we could greatly increase our financial resources, and at the same time multiply our available platform advocates, some measure of concentration would be absolutely necessary. Lecturers who go about the country, east, west, north, and south, at haphazard, pay over most of their receipts to railway companies and hotel proprietors. What they have left for themselves is a miserable pittance. Moreover, their work is largely fruitless, because it proceeds upon no sort of plan. What is the real use of lecturing in some little town for a single evening, when no Freethought lecture has been heard there before for twelve months, and none will be heard there again for another twelve months? No business could ever be conducted in this way without ending in speedy bankruptcy. It must be obvious to anyone who will take the trouble to think that continuity of effort is a primary condition of success. Now, in our special circumstances, this means concentration; and it is easier to concentrate in London than anywhere else. In the first place, the six millions of people in the metropolis live closely together; in the second place, the principal lecturers live there, and hotel bills will therefore disappear, and travelling expenses be reduced to an inconsiderable minimum. Of course there will be the expense of halls and advertising, but the collections will break the back of such expenditure.

Where continuity of effort already exists in the provinces, the Branches will not suffer in the least, even during this trial period of six months. The lecturers will still visit places like Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham, as before. It is only the *scattered* work that will be cut off for that period in the interest of this experiment in concentration.

Some persons, and perhaps many, will notice that I am not included in the scheme. For this there are two reasons. First, I do not think it is advisable, at any rate for the present, that the N. S. S. President should be in the employment of the Executive. Second, I do not want the Twentieth Century Fund to be used in any way for my personal advantage, or even for what might be erroneously construed as such. Nevertheless, I intend to give this scheme my most earnest and zealous support. I shall lecture for it, though not at its expense. Where courses of week-night lectures are arranged I will deliver my share, and more than my share, and do so gratuitously. In the case of Sunday evening lectures—and I hope to see a hall opened in the East End of London—I shall have to make a charge based upon a calculation of my average earnings in the Athenæum Hall. But I can only spare *a few* Sunday evenings. I cannot be expected to do more than give the other platforms the occasional advantage of the President's appearance upon them. For the rest, I have simply to say that as this scheme is (so to speak) a child of mine, I am not likely to let it suffer from want of nursing. Perhaps I shall have more to say about it in next week's *Freethinker*. Meanwhile I ask the Freethought party to take it as an earnest of what will be done if they give adequate support to the Twentieth Century Fund.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Source of Moral Obligation.

ONE of the questions which constantly occupy the attention of ethical writers is, "What is the source of moral obligation?" After ages of experience, it is not difficult to decide what actions are moral; but the point to be considered is, *Why* are they so, and what are the best means to be employed to promote good conduct? The Christian's answer is plain, notwithstanding that it is thoroughly fallacious. According to orthodox Christianity, the moral source is supernatural, its sanction consists in obeying God's will, and its principal incentive is the hope of reward in some future state of existence. Now, Secularists cannot accept these conclusions, inasmuch as they are all based upon individual speculation, and they lack the support of reason and experience, without which no moral code is adequate to meet human requirements.

The Secularist's answer is not only definite, but it is upheld by reason and justified by experience. From a Secular standpoint, human nature is the source of moral obligation; hence we urge that the more our nature is cultivated the better and stronger will be the moral source. Secularism teaches that the welfare of society, both individually and collectively, should be the true motive for moral conduct; while the incentive is to be found in the endeavor to promote the happiness and prosperity of the human race in *this* life, irrespective of any consideration of an existence hereafter. We, as Secularists, recognise that our obligation to live moral lives is derived from the fact that, as we are here and are recipients of certain advantages from society, we deem it a duty to repay, by life service, the benefits thus received. It has been well said by Emerson that "the mind of this age has fallen away from theology to morals." This is an obvious truth, for the intellect of the age is more than ever finding its justification for being moral in the results of action, rather than in the commands of creeds and dogmas. Still, it must be admitted that although, like trees, we grow and expand from within, there seems, as it were, an iron band around us, that prevents our free expansion and our full growth. The quality of our acts may be good to a certain degree, but it is not of the necessary strength. The quality has been impoverished through neglect and theological adulteration; and what is now required is persistent and intelligent conduct, that shall purify life, and rid it of the legacy of ignorance, folly, and superstition of the dark past. Our hope is in purification; we want earnestness and candor to take the place of the apathy and hypocrisy which have so long held sway. Then practical morality will illuminate the hearts of men, and virtue will shed its lustre upon the emancipated humanity of the world.

While we have ample reason for gratification at the progress of Secular ideas as to morality, we are not oblivious of the fact that the method of advocacy adopted by recent ethical writers has tended largely to confuse the issues pertaining to the moral question. These gentlemen have not entirely outgrown the inconsistency born of theological influence. For instance, they profess to be opposed to Christianity, and yet they favor and sanction some of its most palpable absurdities. They also avow that their teachings are distinct from Secularism, while the constitution of their "distinct" Association is based upon one of the fundamental principles of the Secular Society. We gave some instances of this last week in our article on "Ethical Confusion." We find a similar perturbation of mind manifested in an article by Mr. George A. Smith, which appeared in the *Ethical World* of August 11. The writer says:—

> "The constitution of the Union of Ethical Societies affirms one of its objects to be, 'By purely human and natural means to assist individual and social efforts after right living.' The words descriptive of the means to be employed, though expressing an undeniable truth, seem to be really superfluous; for, whether or not there be a divine, and whether or not there be a supernatural, it is manifestly beyond the power of any society or union of societies of human beings to employ divine or supernatural means for the furthering of any object at all. To assert that our means for helping to righteousness are to be only human and natural is to allow that other people may perhaps employ means that are not human and natural—which appears to me to be an absurdity, and, moreover, an aggressive and dogmatic absurdity. It is an assertion that quite needlessly and gratuitously offends well-meaning workers, who perchance think that they have some power of evoking, if not of themselves employing, some means that are other than human and natural. Let them think so; what does it matter?"

Apart from the ambiguity of much of the above, it is a curious mixture of truth and error. Certain it is that the object given from the Ethical Union is not "distinct" from Secularism, for the same idea was propounded many years ago by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, and is still inculcated by the National Secular Society. But Mr. Smith thinks that the use of the words "human" and "natural" is "superfluous," because, even if the

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"superfluous" exist, it can be of no service in ethical culture. He forgets that the means of promoting the well-being of society have always been considered either as natural or supernatural, or as a mixture of both. Therefore, from an ethical standpoint, it is desirable to make it clear that moralists rely for assistance in their work upon purely "human and natural means." A distinction is made between "evoking" and "employing," but for what purpose it is not at all evident; for to evoke supernatural aid implies a belief in it. Although the prayers of human beings are "human efforts," their object is to obtain "divine" aid. Mr. Smith admits that the "object" of his Society expresses "an undeniable truth," and he does not agree with the assertion that the means should be considered only human and natural. Of those who think that aid comes through a supernatural source he says: "Let them think so; what does it matter?" We answer it matters very much if it is "an undeniable truth" that the opposite view is correct. When the Royal Society was established, it was said to be for the discovery and diffusion of natural knowledge, it being the custom at that time to ascribe almost everything that happened to supernatural causes. We allege it to be of the highest importance that men should understand that the means for their improvement are real and natural, not imaginary and supernatural, which Mr. Smith himself admits can never further "any object at all."

Mr. Smith thinks that a "case might easily be made out for prayer—not that cringing and grovelling form of prayer that appeals directly to an assumed power or mind different from and higher than man, but a prayer that expresses in poetic and rhapsodic language the highest and noblest aspirations of man." Of course, if society could be reformed by prayer, the object sought for would not be gained by "purely natural means." Intelligent persons, however, do not supplicate the invariable order of nature, but adapt themselves thereto, and comply with the natural conditions by which they are surrounded as best they can. Whether it be by prayer or not that society is reformed never enters the minds of those who understand those conditions of existence which really determine human operations, whether for good or evil. So long as people believed in supernatural interference in the affairs of every-day life, health, education, and social comfort were neglected, the study of these not being thought necessary to moral living. Besides, it is not reasonable to expect people to adopt purely human and natural methods if they believe that the world is governed by a supernatural being who is supreme over all. Neither can such believers be consistent workers in a society whose teachings allege that the conditions of existence can be modified and improved by purely human effort. Mr. Smith directs the attention of ethical societies to the methods adopted by the Churches, but his description of prayer would fail to find a sympathetic response in any church with which we are acquainted. This coquetting with the believers in Christianity, or "running with the hare and hunting with the hounds," is not ethical consistency; and, moreover, it deprives humanity of that moral courage which adds nobility to character.

That Mr. Smith, like many of his ethical co-workers, is guilty of this inconsistency is placed beyond all doubt by his following reference to Christ:—

> "But, even more than in prayer and in ritual, the Church has found its main strength for uplifting the people in the preaching of Christ. It appears to me to be mere folly for the Ethical Societies to neglect that great life, which has been the most potent influence for good in the history of the world.....I do protest that Christians have no right to a monopoly of Christ, and that a body of men and women banded together for the furtherance of the ethical life cannot afford to ignore that life which, more than all others, sets before the world an ethical ideal.....I do urge that, whatever the dangers and difficulties the preaching of Christ by non-Christian people entails, that great lever for uplifting the race should be utilised to the fullest extent."

Here we have rhapsody with a vengeance. To use Mr. Smith's own words: "All this talking about ethics is mere waste of brain power and an idle squandering of life." The fact is, there is no conduct attributed to Christ that has the slightest useful bearing upon the requirements of English industrial enterprise. How do social affairs stand to-day after this supposed lever, with its much-talked-of potent influence, has been operating for two thousand years? Mr. Smith admits in his article that society is at the present time a prey to vices of all kinds. He asks:—

> "Are not the moral perils of vice, intemperance, and gambling, the social perils arising from overcrowding, sweating, lack of education, and a thousand other causes, a menace to civilisation of so grave a nature as to make it urgent upon all who have eyes to see and hearts to feel to unite in one common crusade against the common danger?"

We answer decidedly in the affirmative, and herein we see the failure of Christ as a "lever for uplifting the race." Whatever ethical teachers may preach, they do not attempt either to follow his example or to obey his precepts.

We respectfully suggest that Mr. Smith should study the estimate of Christ's character as given in our article in reply to Dr. Coit, which appeared in last week's *Freethinker*. In the meantime, we submit that, in our opinion, the picture drawn of the life of Christ and of his preaching being "a moral lever to raise the world" is entirely arbitrary, based upon imagination, and not founded upon fact. CHARLES WATTS.

Journalists and Jesus.

THE Holy Ghost and the Angel Gabriel might be regarded as journalists. They have sufficient claims to be elevated even to the high dignity of Fellows or Vice-Presidents of the Institute of Journalists. The misfortune is that there is no certainty as to their existence, except in the imagination of the pious; and their addresses are vague. They are not even known to the police.

The four Evangelists, to whom it is supposed we are indebted for the Synoptic Gospels, might also be termed journalists, except that they have dealt so badly with their task. If alive now, they would not be entrusted by any respectable journal with the small responsibility of writing a paragraph about a vehicular accident in the next street. They would be certain to mix it all up.

Jesus must have miscalculated the period for his appearance on earth. Why didn't he wait until he could be interviewed and Kodaked? It would have been better for him and for us. We should then have known what sort of a person he really was. Somebody might have tempted him to speak into a phonograph, and then we should have had his accents permanently with us. We could also have seen his portrait in the *Penny Illustrated*.

It really does seem funny that Dr. Parker can be reported verbatim to the extent of three or four columns, whilst his Master is known to us only by some meagre and fragmentary records. As a matter of choice, one would prefer to know a little more about Jesus and a little less about Dr. Parker; but the Almighty, apparently, has ordered it otherwise.

The members of the Chartered Institute of Journalists have recently met in London. A little later, and some of them will be drifting to the Church Congress at Newcastle-on-Tyne. That will be in the way of business. Why on earth they want any preparatory sermons it is impossible to imagine. Journalists, as we know them, are not given to sermons unless they are forced to hear them and can make "copy" out of them.

When the present writer was a member of the Executive of the great Institute of Journalists, he always protested against any sermonising being introduced in the program. But he was overruled by Sir Algernon Borthwick, now Lord Glenesk, the proprietor of the *Morning Post*. It was thought that pressmen must have pious discourses delivered to them, whether they liked them or not. Some saw the possibility of "linage" in the pulpit utterances, and availed themselves of the opportunity. Others watched the speed of the preacher, and noted how often he achieved the rate of two hundred words a minute, and mentally made phraseograms when they didn't go to sleep.

At the recent Conference there was the usual maudlin nonsense in the way of special sermons—at St. Paul's, the Brompton Oratory, and the City Temple. Some

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journalists went to each. Or so-called "journalists" went thither, for the Institute now takes in anybody who will pay a subscription and who has distinguished himself or herself by writing a little humble "par."

Dr. Parker—they called him *John* Parker on their program, but they now know that his real name is Joseph Parker—preached a special sermon. He preceded it by a prayer, which is a choice sample of bad English and rambling ideas. The "Amen" which concludes it is the best part about it.

He says something about "creeping into Thy house," and bread sent from heaven, and blades of grass, and a feast in the wilderness, and deliverance by the Cross. "Oh, the miracle, the thrilling wonder of it all!"

Yes, indeed, the miracle and thrilling wonder of it all! The miracle is that such palpable nonsense could impose on rational creatures at all. The wonder is that they haven't resented such transparent humbug by throwing a stool at the praying idiot's head. Later on in his sermon he talks of the "mocking spirit that laughs at prayer and takes no interest in music." But why should a person who laughs at prayer necessarily take no interest in music? This kind of linking two absolutely separate ideas may suit Dr. Parker's rhetoric, such as it is; but it is obvious nonsense to any intelligent reader. Here is an extract from this special sermon of his to journalists:—

> "Religion is not the only thing in which some men are infidels or unbelievers. You think that 'infidel' is an ecclesiastical term, a chapel word, a church vocable. No; it penetrates the whole substance of life. Men are infidel at many points; and infidelity never made any man strong or grand, a fountain of consolation or a Hercules of help; it robs man, utterly depletes and crushes man. Some men have said in written books, therefore I am not quoting from memory, that when they gave up their recognition of God they gave up pictures and music and the parabolic and symbolic aspects of the very nature they professed or endeavored to worship. When God goes, he takes a lot with him."

What nonsense! Why should a man, when he gives up his "recognition of God," give up pictures and music too? The man who suggests this is obviously a fool.

The *Rock*, which is usually very tender with Dr. Parker, finds itself compelled to make various serious reflections on this sermon. After referring to the sermon by Canon Scott Holland at St. Paul's, it says in an editorial: "It was left to Dr. Parker to depart from the beaten track of thought, and we must sorrowfully confess that, in doing so, he stumbled, to the possible gratification of some, but to the genuine distress of many more. To aim at originality is commendable in a world of common places, but even if the mark be hit the result is not always happy." The *Rock* further observes that this was not the first occasion on which the same preacher has given the enemy occasion to blaspheme. He was, the *Rock* admits, startling; but, it asks, was he fairly honest, and, if honest, was he wise?

Dr. Parker had something to say about "ideal journalism," of which he evidently does not approve. He says:—

> "I do not want the ideal newspaper. I have no time to read it, and no desire to read it, and on the whole I can well do without it. I want to know the facts. If there was a murder yesterday, tell me about it; and if a man or woman was divorced last week, what is the story? Hold it in the sunlight and let the sun burn it. I want to know the facts, the events, or things which did really occur, and I want to study them from the religious as well as the social standpoint; they are to me lessons in human nature."

This is very sensible; though it might be put more forcibly and effectively. The extracts we have given cover the most important portions of Dr. Parker's address to the journalists. It is a pity that he spoiled his holiday by returning to town to deliver this discourse, which is far from satisfying. Though a silly old gentleman often, there are some good points about Dr. Parker. He is always in earnest, and now and then he is eloquent. But he is dreadfully egotistical. He has a sublime indifference to fact and logic; he has a flow, but not a command, of words; his rhetoric is mostly hysterical, and his ebullitions in regard to "infidelity" are childish and ridiculous in the extreme.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Clerical Cackle.

"'Tis oft religion does the foulest treason.—*Lucretius.*"

ACCORDING to the *Daily News* of September 10, the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Ripon has been unburdening himself of his lordly views on science. This wealthy disciple of the poor Galilean Carpenter quotes with approval Fiske's remark that it is utterly misleading to talk of any conflict between science and religion. After this, we are not surprised to hear that this spiritual peer of England imagines that religion is now scientific, and science religious. Such reconciliation as his lordship hints at is clearly impossible. The impregnable position of science may be stated in a few words. Science claims, and will wrest from religion, the entire domain of cosmological theory.

Science and religion have ever been mortal enemies. Scientific teaching, scientific investigation, or, indeed, any form of intellectual liberty, has always been incompatible with assent to the dogmas of religion. The entire organisation of priestcraft has invariably been brought to bear against science on the ground that it is a powerful solvent of religious faith. Ignorant theologians, innocent of scientific training, have always sought to weed out the faculty of thinking in the rank and file of the faithful. Like Ulysses's seamen, their ears are to be filled with wax and deafened to the song of the Sirens. There is hardly a field of study which does not contain pales beyond which the true believer must not stray. Think of the obligation imposed upon Christians of taking not only their religion, but their science, politics, and sociology, from a band of priests, over-zealous and under-educated, whose only excuse for folly is their ignorance. Astronomy was opposed by the Church. The Christian fathers rejected, among other things, the notion of the plurality of worlds. Not on physical grounds, of which, in truth, they knew nothing, but on account of its supposed inconsistency with an imaginary scheme of revelation. As, however, they also denied the existence of the Antipodes upon a similar principle, their saintly decision is not likely to be pleaded as final.

The resistance of the Church of Christ to the prevalent opinion of scientists has no indisputable claim to our respect. When we remember that the system of Copernicus, the discoveries of Galileo, the law of gravitation of Newton, and the Darwinian theory were all in turn received in the same venerable quarter with equal disfavor, we are inclined to attribute that resistance, not to any clear perception of the comparative weakness of the arguments of the scientists, but to a general dislike of knowledge. The priests always feared that a closer scrutiny might discover the absurdity of the doctrines of their so-called revelation. Chemistry was opposed as an impious prying into the secrets of God. The early chemists were charitably regarded as agents of the Devil. Physiology and medicine were furiously opposed on similar grounds. Geology and biology were also opposed tooth and nail by the beloved Bride of Christ. She bitterly resented inquiry. She preferred explaining natural phenomena by mythological invention. But, as the fairy tales of religion lost their hold upon the imaginations of men, scepticism took the place of blind belief. As in the great age when the whole world was first opened up to the enterprise of voyagers, and an impulse over all the coasts of the civilised world drove men abroad in the hope of discovery and adventure, the motive was the high curiosity of scepticism. Men were seized with a longing to satisfy the emotion of wonder, by which the unknown and the undiscovered attract daring men within their sphere. So, in the early ages, men were to be found—

> "Yearning with a desire
> To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bounds of human thought."

Knowledge was sought for its own sake, with little expectation or desire of turning it to personal advantage. The fearful struggle to establish intellectual liberty extends over the centuries. In that long war the Church of Christ hesitated at nothing in order to crush freedom. If she had been able, she would have strangled science in its cradle. It is too true that the world "grew grey at the breath" of Christianity. The

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sun of Christianity was not fully risen till it had seen the paling of the star of Liberty. The scientific intellect was compelled, like an exhausted soil, to lie fallow for two millenniums before it could regain the elements necessary to its fertility and strength. What a record of unutterable guilt this monstrous and blood-stained Christian superstition has to answer for. Let the murder of the hapless Hypatia, the fiery martyrdom of Giordano Bruno, the prison cell of Galileo, bear witness. Even now, in the face of the "Galilean Serpent," scotched, but not slain, there are some weaklings who would surrender in the face of the foe. Can it be that Vanini, Campanella, Spinoza, suffered without results? Can it be that any have so far forgotten the history of our glorious past as to trust to priests for the future? Rather it should be that we attack with renewed vigor this hoary superstition, to fulfil the world-old desire, that man shall be free and priests shall no longer be permitted to set despairing limits to our knowledge and to blast our hopes. MIMNERMUS.

Secular Education in the People's Schools.

THE Conference on Secular Education in Board Schools, convened by the National Secular Society, and held in the hall of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union, will probably do little to influence the coming School Board election. Its conveners hardly professed to believe that it would or could. But it was, nevertheless, more significant than the London press appears to have understood. The delegates—from branches of the National Secular Society itself, S. D. F. Branches, Radical Clubs, and Ethical Societies—evidently represented a widespread dissatisfaction with the "compromise" of 1871—a dissatisfaction which the official leaders of the Progressive party have not hitherto taken sufficiently into account. There is no doubt that, but for the fear of the Riley faction, and the party pressure to which it lent excuse, the question of secular education would before this have been made an issue in School Board contests. It is plain that many of the London Radicals are determined that a straight fight on that issue shall not much longer be deferred to any consideration whatever.

There were some curious cross currents in the Conference. The Social Democratic delegates saw and used an opportunity for pushing the candidatures of the four candidates of the S. D. F., who are already in the field, all of them being frankly pledged to secular schooling. The delegates of the Ethical Societies (some of whom were rather afraid of Socialism) endeavored to obtain the approval of the Conference for a scheme of "moral instruction" to which they referred in somewhat vague terms; but the Conference would have none of it, and insisted upon confining itself to its one simple and declared object. In the end the Conference, including many of the non-Socialist delegates, felt bound to pledge its support, by a large majority, to the four S. D. F. candidates. So far as the information obtainable on the spot went, these are the only candidates who have as yet issued addresses which definitely pledge them on the subject. But it is characteristic of the apathy which distinguishes this election that information as to candidates and their professions was but scantily forthcoming.

Mr. G. W. Foote, President of the N. S. S., who occupied the chair, was careful to explain that by "secular" he did not mean "secularist." One delegate gave point to this by confessing himself a Churchman, whose public advocacy of secular education and opposition to the compromise dated back more than fifteen years. It is as well to recognise that among those who object to be rated and taxed for the maintenance of School Board religion are many Catholic Churchmen who do not in the least approve of the line taken by Messrs. Diggle and Athelstan Riley in the heated controversies of recent years. They simply object to having to pay for the teaching in public elementary schools of a form of religion which they regard as the least common measure of Protestant Nonconformity established and endowed out of the rates. "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants"; but it is, at least, a defective religion from the point of view of those who believe in a historic Church as the interpreter and custodian of Holy Writ. The Secularist, of course, objects to the teaching, in public schools and at the public expense, of any religion at all.

As we have already said, the promoters of the Conference do not look for great results at the November election, and the most important work undertaken on Tuesday night was the organisation of a permanent committee, which will devote its energies during the next three years to the education of the ratepayers on the subject. If the committee is made a really representative one, we may expect to see the well-worn "religious question" of the people's schools take on a new development. Such a development has, however, long been seen by close observers to be inevitable.

—*London Echo.*

Acid Drops.

"A MINISTER" writes to the *British Weekly* in reference to the recent letter published in that paper with the heading, "Atheistic Lectures." He recommends as the best "antidote for Secular Demonstrations" the systematic and vigorous preaching of the Gospel in public places. His advice is to "leave disputations for other occasions." What "other occasions"? He cannot mean in church or chapel. Perhaps he really means—leave disputation alone altogether. That is quite the feeling of many Christian advocates who have not emerged in any great triumph from controversies in which they have engaged with unbelievers. No wonder they now fight shy of discussion.

The sole representative of the Church of England at Pretoria was the Rev. J. Godfrey. After the escape of Mr. Winston Churchill this gentleman withdrew from religious services to the officers, and wrote a letter which they considered both improper and insulting. Parson Godfrey valued the safety of his position more than the immortal souls of the British prisoners. But that is, after all, by no means surprising. Historically, it is characteristic of the clerical profession.

The disaster at Galveston has resulted, apparently, in the loss of more than 8,000 lives. What a beautiful "act of God"! According to the Scriptures, "He doeth all things well." But somehow we don't see it.

Moody is dead, but Sankey lives. Some people say he is a Semite, and he certainly has that appearance. However, he sings the praises of the Christian Savior, and no doubt does very well at the business, for he is still extremely popular. There was a terrible crush the other evening at Exeter Hall, on the occasion of his reception. Many thousands of people were invited, and only 3,000 could get in. The result was the blocking of the Strand, the worry of the police, and a prodigal use of bad language.

The Pope doesn't mean to be out of the China scramble. He wants his share of what is going, and has put in a claim for 60,000,000 francs on account of murdered Catholic missionaries. That is a very big figure. The Pope and all his Cardinals might be polished off for such an amount.

Some day we shall know the truth about foreign missionaries. In China that end is being contributed to by the jealousy between the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries. The Rev. Charles Inwood, recently returned from the northern provinces of China, has been addressing meetings in Ireland on the subject of foreign missions. He said the Roman Catholic missionaries were political agents and used carnal weapons. "They had contributed to a large extent to the present unfortunate situation." Of course, the Protestant missionaries had done nothing of this kind. "So far as the Protestant missions were concerned, there was no bitter antagonism on the part of the Chinese." All the same, we notice that the Protestant missionaries made a bolt for it wherever they were able. It is estimated that ninety-three British and American missionaries have been murdered in addition to several Swedish and Danish Protestants. At the same time, over 170 missionaries stationed in the provinces of Chi-li and Shan-si are unaccounted for.

A "Thirty Years' Reader" writes to *Reynolds's Newspaper* a scathing exposure of missionary methods. The letter cannot be dismissed as mere irresponsible chatter. The editor says that the writer holds a very important position in China, and has exceptional opportunities of knowing that country and its people. The writer thinks it "high time something was done at home to prevent any more missionaries entering China." He points out that it is hopeless to attempt to make real converts of the Celestials, and he distinctly discredits the "addresses and reports of glorious work" given by missionaries when visiting this country.

The missionaries, he says, "have the best houses in China, finely furnished, large staffs of servants, and a splendid table They do no work during the summer, but go away to the hills, where they have fine summer residences built, and they are not long in the country before they commence to buy land and make money. This is not idle talk, as all foreign residents in China can bear out what I say. I have visited missionaries and dined with them, and can assure you that if they were in England they could not keep up the houses they do here and be able to go away to a summer resort for three or four months every year. Another great benefit they have is that they get so much for every child they have. Now, Mr. Editor, I beg of you to do your best to try and prevent any more money being sent to this country to support missionaries. I am sure the money can be laid out to much better advantage in England amongst the starving poor than to keep a lot of idle people here in luxury. The missionaries are flocking to Shanghai in hundreds, and many of them stay with their

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families at the best hotels at seven dollars per day. This equals at least fifteen shillings per day each, so you will see it requires capital to do this. You can hear people remark on all hands what an enormous amount of money must be sent from England to keep these people going. Many say they are a curse to the country."

The *Cape Times* publishes an account of recent events in China, contributed by Mr. W. Wilmer, a Cape Colonist, who for some years past has been settled at Newchwang as steamship and railway agent. He says: "Anyone who has travelled in China will endorse my statement that it is an undoubted fact that the missionary body are entirely responsible for the present state of affairs. The Chinaman is naturally of a peaceful and law-abiding disposition, but will not brook any undue interference with his religious beliefs and superstitions, which were in existence long before Christianity was ever heard of, and he very sensibly wants to know why we are so desirous of thrusting our particular dogmas down his throat when he does not want them. The merchant and trade he welcomes everywhere, and is most scrupulously honorable in his transactions with them."

"These poor misguided missionaries," continues this resident, who is in an extremely good position to judge, "do ten thousand times more harm to trade and commerce than ever they do good to religion. They are most cordially detested by native and foreigner alike, and if the foolish people at home who support these missions could only be brought to realise this and keep them in their own country, it would be much better for the world in general, and we traders out here in particular. These 'Jesus Christ men,' as they are called, have been preaching the doctrine of hell-fire so long to these poor benighted heathen that they (the heathen) term us everywhere the 'foreign devils.' Then when any trouble comes the Gospel-mongers are the first to run away from the consequences of their folly. We have quite a number of these missionary refugees quartered upon us now for protection who have fled from up country."

"If," says Mr. Wilmer, "you talk to the Chinese of religion, of heaven, or hell, they will yawn; but speak to them of business, and they are all attention. I should like to place this problem before the fools at home who believe in converting the so-called heathen. In one province of China only there is a population of ten to twelve millions of friendly and peaceable people, and eighteen missionaries in eight years have converted eleven Chinese; how long, then, will it take to convert the remainder?"

Some enterprising idiot has sent us a tattered copy of *Hymns and Songs for Mission Services*, with the stamp of "Matthias Road Mission Chapel" upon it. A hymn is marked, No. 183, "Stop poor sinner." Well, we did stop, just to see what it was about.

Can you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting woe?

Such is the first question we meet, and as it doesn't trouble us we pass on to the meant-to-be startling statement that—

Ere you are aware, you'll drop
Into the burning lake.

But even this doesn't startle us. We have heard it so often.

Ghastly death will quickly come
And drag you to the bar;
Then, to hear your awful doom
Will fill you with despair.

Well, it all depends on what drinks are served at that "bar." Lemon squash or iced claret-cup wouldn't be a bad doom in this weather.

Writing to us on the withdrawal of the Crewe Wesleyans from the Free Church Council, because the Council passed a resolution demanding a School Board, Mr. Hirst Hollowell says Crewe is a borough where all the schools are denominational, where free education has been refused again and again, and where Nonconformist parents have been directed by the Government to get their free education at schools most objectionable to their conscience. The Crewe incident, unfortunately, does not stand by itself. In numerous districts a portion of the Wesleyan influence is too often thrown into the scale of denominational monopoly. At Hyde, Cheshire, a working man's child, for whom free education was requested at the Wesleyan school, was refused, and the Board of Education, being appealed to, directed the father, if he wished for free education, to send the child to St. Paul's Roman Catholic School. He replied to the Board that he would do nothing of the sort, and week after week sent his little girl to the Wesleyan school; but every time she was turned back. Then the father was actually prosecuted for not having sent his child to school, and was fined. He refused to pay the fine for an offence he had not committed, and thereupon, instead of distraining on his goods, the authorities had him arrested and marched through the streets between two policemen to the lock-up. The Northern Counties Education League became disagreeably active, and the Home Secretary ordered the fine to be remitted. Mr. Hirst Hollowell regrets that there are other Free Church offenders besides Wesleyans. A Congregational minister promised the other day to attend a meeting in a large town of the North, to advocate a sorely-needed School Board; but, before the meeting, he received a letter from one of his deacons, who took a personal interest in a Congregational Voluntary school, warning him against doing so. Mr. Hirst Hollowell is sorry to have to tell, for the first time, such a story against his own denomination, but thinks it only right to do so while criticising the action of members of another denomination. Another correspondent calls attention to the action of the Wesleyan minister and officials at Worksop, who, in defiance of the Conference resolutions, united with the railway, drink, and other interests, who formed the anti-School Board party, to support the collection of a voluntary rate, to be collected by the ordinary rate collector, and thus keep out a School Board. Out of this rate the Wesleyans received £800 for their own school.—*Christian World.*

The Clerical Superintendent of the Protestant Reformation Society has written to the Home Secretary, protesting against the remarks of Mr. Plowden, magistrate at Marlborough-street Police-court, in a recent case which was before him. It may be remembered that a man named George Carroll was fined forty shillings for "using insulting language" towards the Roman Catholic religion in a lecture on "Christianity *versus* Romanism," delivered in Hyde Park. Mr. Plowden remarked: "If the people you were addressing, and those you were insulting by your offensive caricature of the Catholic Faith, had carried you to the nearest pump, I don't think anybody would pity you.....It is scandalous that a man with a grain of sense should attack religion in this way simply to pander to his own self-conceit.....I hope the day will come when all this kind of speaking in the parks will become contrary to law."

We protested at the time against these most injudicious and extra-judicial remarks of Mr. Plowden—who, by the way, seems to be singularly pleased when listening to his own voice. The Rev. Dr. Wright says, very properly: "I cannot but regard it as most dangerous to the public peace that an English magistrate should thus encourage the roughs to take the law in their own hands, and to lay violent hands on open-air speakers from whom they may differ." The Home Secretary promises, in reply, to give due attention to the subject of the letter.

There seems to have been a curious confusion as to the form of affirmation at an inquest held last week before Mr. Wynne E. Baxter, the East London Coroner, at the Mile End Vestry Hall. One of the jury, when about to be sworn, said: "I object to hold that book." The oath was then administered to the foreman; and the rest of the jury, with the exception of the objector, took hold of the Testaments, and were sworn in in the usual fashion, in a body. To the man who objected to take the oath on religious grounds, the Coroner's Officer said: "The same *oath* which your foreman has taken on his part you affirm on yours?" "Yes," replied the juror, and took his seat.

An Evangelical Church weekly, the *News*, says "we think Apostolic bishops could be readily found amongst our experienced and working clergy who would prove quite as efficient, if not more so, than some now on the Bench, with a stipend of £1,000, or at most £2,000." We think so too. Any way, there is nothing to be said in favor of the attempt now being made in Southwark to raise £133,000 to secure an income for a single bishop of £4,000.

Canon Philips, speaking at the Carlisle Diocesan Conference last week, said he thought there were far too many Sunday amusements—tennis, golf, cycling, and Sunday papers. Many people think there are far too few. But, if these were prohibited, are the Gospel-shops likely to profit by an increased attendance? The public-houses might.

Sabbatarian Christians at Ramsgate have called upon the Corporation to put down the Sunday trading at the entrance to the pier and on the sands. Apparently they cannot bear to see a man eating whelks or a boy drinking lemonade on the Lord's Day. They get their own grub indoors, and regard outdoor eating and drinking as flat blasphemy.

"Bruno" writes to the Paisley *Daily Express* on the question of Sunday trading, which seems to be agitating that town and neighborhood. He replies to a correspondent who quotes Exodus xx. and 8 to back up his Sabbatarian views. "Bruno" asks him whether he is "prepared to endorse other passages in Exodus such as Ex. xxxi. 14, 15, where it says all Sabbath-breakers are to be put to death; or Ex. xxxv. 2, 3, where it says: 'Those who kindle a fire on the Sabbath Day shall surely be put to death'; or if we go to Numbers, where it says the penalty for picking up sticks on the seventh day is death. I think," adds "Bruno," "I have shown the absurdity of going to Moses, or whoever wrote those books, for our guidance at this time of day."

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In the same paper "Riada," dealing with a memorial from the Scottish National Sabbath School Unions to the Paisley Town Council, also on the subject of Sabbath trading, quotes Paul in his Epistle to the Romans xiv. 4, 5, 6: "One man esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Also he quotes Colossians ii. 16 and 17: "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days."

One has always been struck by this allusion in Colossians to the new moon. Has it, perchance, some reference, prophetic and half-hidden, to the lunacy which periodically assails modern municipal authorities when incited to Sabbatarian persecutions?

Messrs. Cadbury, the famous cocoa manufacturers, whose advertisements of their own goods generally contain reflections on those of their trade rivals, are Quakers, and therefore opposed to war. They are so much for peace at any price that they refused to tender for supplying the British soldiers in South Africa, but they supplied their share of the chocolate boxes which the Queen sent out as presents to her fighting men. They defend this action on grounds of "loyalty." So it seems to be the Queen first with them, and Jesus Christ (as they understand him) afterwards. A good deal of correspondence on the subject has appeared in the Birmingham *Mail*.

Someone has sent us a copy of the *Islington Gazette* containing a letter by John H. Mitchell against "Infidels" and "Infidelity." We must be excused from answering this person. His information, his ability, his manners, and his veracity, are all beneath contempt.

Churchyards are supposed to be more or less filled with the dead. But a certain parson has recently refused to let the word "died" appear on a tombstone in his "God's Acre." He says it doesn't square with his ideas of immortality. But did not Paul say that the seed must die before it can come to anything? Of course he was wrong in his biology, but that doesn't matter. It is hard that a Christian who agrees with Paul should be sat upon by a clergyman who says that Paul was inspired.

The *Church Gazette* is not a little sarcastic at the expense of the *Methodist Times*, which, it says, has its little way of putting things that sometimes reads rather strangely. For instance, the principal leader of the other week had the following heading:—

ONE MILLION { Guineas / Pledges / Conversions.

From which, says the *Church Gazette*, an ill-natured person might gather that the first thing is guineas, the next teetotalism, and the last "conversion." By the way, one wishes someone would define this last term.

I once had a female relative much given to tract-distributing (says a correspondent). She would stop anybody and everybody for the sake of getting rid of a tract. If a baby was born, its parents received tracts; if anyone died, the survivors were served with quite a handful of literature. The people round, being of a charitable sort, bore with her; but I fancy they had a notion she was not quite right in her head. I shall never forget how she interviewed a friend's gardener, and forced a tract upon him. He asked for several more, which she gladly supplied. "Thank'ee, ma'am," he said, being a most polite man. "I'm allus glad o' these. Bless you, it was only this morning as I said to my wife, 'I must be getting some more tracts soon,' ses I, 'for they be the best things I knows on for shaving-papers.'" "But don't you read them?" gasped the lady, who had kept him in this kind of literature for some time. "Read 'em, ma'am? Not me. I can't read." My relative collapsed.

The *Record* is asking why sermons are so often "ill-judged and inappropriate," especially those delivered in the churches of holiday resorts. And the *Church Gazette* alludes to the "vacuous and fatuous utterances which have evoked the cry about 'Why men won't go to church.'"

Ructions at Rhyl. Bills have actually been posted upon the doors and walls of churches and chapels announcing a theatrical performance. But the offenders have been caught, and the magistrates may be relied upon to avenge such awful sacrilege.

Catholic processions at Hull are exercising the mind of the faithful Protestants. The vicar of Garton points out in the local press that they are illegal. Still, he seems to be impartial, for he recommends the suppression of all "religious manifestations" in the public thoroughfares.

Rev. James Henry Thomson, curate of Fawley, is in trouble. The other party to the trouble is a very young servant girl. The rest may be imagined.

The Bible Christian Society at Whitemoor, near St. Dennis, was holding a harvest thanksgiving service, when John Trevenna, an "acceptable" local preacher, fell down in a faint, and expired in less than fifteen minutes. He was heard to mutter, "I'm passing," but did not add to what destination. He leaves a widow in delicate health, and a large family, so that his "passing" can hardly be regarded as "providential."

The Blackburn Parish Church was built in 1820-1826, at a cost of £26,000. The money was raised by parish rates, levied by a special Act of Parliament. We daresay a handsome Secular Hall could be built at Blackburn on the same easy conditions.

Francis Jackson, builder, of Coles-lane, Sutton Coldfield, has gone bankrupt. Assets £60, liabilities £6,432. Within a week of filing his petition he sent three guineas to the Wesleyan Century Fund. Just in time.

"Felix," of Pontardulais, contributes to the Carmarthen *Welshman* a smartly-written letter in criticism of the Rev. A. Keogh, whose orthodoxy seems to have involved him in a maze of puzzles and absurdities. "Felix" apparently writes so well that the editor of the *Welshman* appends a note, in which he says he has had to omit the latter half of the letter because the being of God, the accuracy of the Bible, etc., are questions too large to be discussed in his correspondence column. Well, the world is wide, and the subjects may be discussed outside the limited space of the *Welshman*, though the editor of that paper seems to be fair enough up to a point.

Every extreme of fanaticism is possible to people who read their Bible conscientiously, and set about putting its precepts into practice. In Illinois there is a sect known as Omish, which forbids that its members shall display any affection for their families, holding that all earthly ties are sinful. One of the Omishites was Sam Moser, who, on account of his love for his wife and family, was expelled from the sect. The terrors of excommunication made Moser insane, and he killed his whole family. The Scripture upon which the creed of Omish is based is Luke xiv. 26: "If any man come unto me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"—a passage that has broken up countless thousands of families, and prevents the father of Moser, who is a member of the sect, from pleading for the life of his son. The good that religion does in this world is a by-product. Its main crop is evil, which is harvested at all seasons. The latest "incarnation" is Mrs. Louis Figg, of Gretna, in Nebraska, who believes herself to be Christ, and to possess his divine attributes. Her delusion is shared by her husband and a knot of followers, and the sect has a creed made up of about equal parts of insanity and ignorance. Female Christs are not a new departure, although reincarnations of the Virgin Mary are more numerous, because physiologically less absurd and theologically just as orthodox. Like the men who have believed themselves other Christs, these women are uniformly insane, which suggests something about the probable mental condition of him of Nazareth.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Praying Mantis, an insect brought to the London Zoo from the Transvaal, is so called because of the prayerful position of its forelegs. "So divine a creature is this esteemed," says an old writer, "that if a child ask the way to such a place, she will stretch out one of her feet, and show him the right way, and seldom or never miss." After this eulogy, it is sad to read that these insects are very voracious and cannibalistic, and if kept together will fight to the death.

Strange Funeral Fancies.

FEW know that a considerable number of people provide themselves with coffins, and sometimes with shrouds. They would generally be regarded as very eccentric, but their only eccentricity appears to be that they wish their last appearance on earth to be in accordance with their own tastes and feeling.

"Yes," said an undertaker, "it is a singular fact that there are many people who are interested in the question of how they will be treated after death.

"Many will go so far as to not only be measured for their coffins and shrouds, but actually have both made according to their directions. I have in mind a case of the lady who, years before she died, had her coffin and shroud made and sent to her home, where they were kept under her bed. Whenever a fit of 'meditation,' as she called it, seized her, she would robe herself in the long white gown and lie down in the coffin. Such examples as this are, of course, rare."

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Special.

The FREETHINKER has been for several months, and is still, published at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed. Readers are warned against sending orders to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. Those premises have for some time been definitively closed, and Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, who cannot be answerable for anything sent to him.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 23, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.C.; 7.30, "Does Death End Us?"

September 30, Glasgow.

October 7, Manchester; 14, Athenæum Hall; 21, Birmingham; 28, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—September 23, Camberwell; 30, Athenæum Hall. October 7, Athenæum Hall; 9 and 10, debate at Bolton; 14 (Sunday), Bolton; 21, Birmingham; 23, 24, 25, and 28 (Sunday), Glasgow and districts. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

J. PAPERNO.—Cannot insert it in that way. Place, time, lecturer, and subject must be sent in each week, by Tuesday's first post at the latest.

G. WILSON.—Those who give are generally those who are the least troubled as to how the money is to be spent. Those who give nothing are always the most anxious. Thanks for your encouraging letter. You may see Mr. Foote at Bristol this winter.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your batches of cuttings.

R. CHAPMAN.—See "Sugar Plums." We note that Mrs. Lamb is "more than satisfied" with the way in which the South Shields Secularists carried out their part of the arrangements at her husband's funeral.

F. J. GOULD.—Thanks for copy of the Leicester Bazaar Program. You owe us no particular thanks for our paragraphs. The Society deserved them, and we were happy to write them. We sometimes wish we had a million of money to float good causes financially. Unfortunately, the Freethought millionaire hasn't come along yet. We should be glad to see him. Effective organisation is ultimately a question of means.

A. A. WATTS.—We do not know of a cognate text in the New Testament, but there is one in the Old Testament—1 Kings xxii. 22.

T. SMYTHE.—Pleased to hear from you. Pray convey our compliments to your soldier comrades who don't swallow all the chaplain's teaching. The famous "Christ" passage in Josephus is dealt with in *Crimes of Christianity*, by Foote and Wheeler, in the chapter on "Pious Forgeries." It was undoubtedly, as Gibbon says, foisted into the text of Josephus "between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius." It was absolutely unknown to Christian writers of the second and third centuries, who would have been delighted to use it. Bishop Warburton said it was "a rank forgery, and a very stupid one too." De Quincey said it had "long been given up as a forgery by all men not lunatic." We do not know of a single Christian scholar who defends the authenticity of the passage as it stands. Some of them say Josephus wrote *something*, but Christian editors have *altered* it! That is, they seek to minimise what they know to be a forgery.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings.

E. VETTERLEIN sends the following resolution on behalf of the West Ham Branch: "That a most hearty vote of thanks be tendered to the speakers at the Freethought Demonstration in Stratford Grove."

F. J. VOISEY.—Thanks. See paragraph.

UNIT.—You will see from an announcement in "Sugar Plums" that the readers of the *Freethinker* will have the benefit of Mr. Foote's criticism of Marie Corelli's *Master Christian*. The other matter will be dealt with before long in a new edition of *Bible and Beer*.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—George Anderson, £10; George Wilson, 5s.; H. Swift, 10s. 6d.

E. R. WOODWARD asks us to announce that Mr. B. Hyatt will give half an hour's elocutionary entertainment before Mr. Watts's lecture this evening (September 23) at Camberwell.

W. DICKSON.—Your suggestion shall be considered. Meanwhile you will find the most important of the contradictions in the *Bible Handbook*.

S. JONES.—Sorry we cannot find room for your letter. Our limited space is too valuable. If your inherited piety doesn't allow you to appreciate the *Bible Handbook*, pass it on to some one less unfortunate.

JAMES NEATE.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Cohen had such a large meeting in Victoria Park to hear his lecture on the Religious Question and our Public Schools.

J. TITHERINGTON.—Thanks for the suggestion, but we are hardly prepared to adopt such methods of "raising the wind." If Freethinkers cannot give for the love of Freethought, they must, as far as we are concerned, keep their money in their pockets.

RECEIVED.—Cape Times—Paisley Daily Express—Welshman (Carmarthen)—Western Daily Mercury—St. Mary Magdalene (Southwark) Parish Magazine—Secular Thought—Liberator—Boston Investigator—Lucifer—Truthseeker (New York)—Two Worlds—Freidenker—Blue Grass Blade—Ethical World—Torch of Reason—Brann's Iconoclast—Sydney Bulletin—Manchester Evening Chronicle—Islington Gazette—Huddersfield Examiner—Daily News—Freethought Magazine.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Special.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.

Shilling Week.

THE first week in October will be a "Shilling Week" in aid of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. During that period I expect to receive one shilling (or more) from hundreds—I would fain hope thousands—of Freethinkers in all parts of the country. All the envelopes will be opened with my own hands, and all letters accompanying the postal orders (or cheques) will be carefully read. A good many subscribers will doubtless, as on previous occasions, take the opportunity of saying whatever happens to be on their minds. I am really anxious to know what they are thinking, and to see what suggestions they have to make.

This time I hope there will be very few laggards. Let all act together. Let every one feel that his fellow Freethinkers are doing something, in common with himself, during that particular week. This alone should be a stimulus and an inspiration.

The poorest can send one shilling. Others can send several shillings. If all do their best, we shall raise an amount of which the party may be proud. Never mind how little you can send. Send it. Numbers tell. Drops enough will make an ocean.

Probably most of those who have promised certain contributions towards the Fund will forward their remittances during the same first week in October. The largest promise—Mr. John Downing's £200—has already been redeemed. Mr. J. Umpleby and Major John C. Harris redeemed *their* promises some time ago.

Now then for a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together—as they say at sea; and we shall get our craft into good, deep, navigable water.

G. W. FOOTE.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

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Sugar Plums.

THERE was a fine audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote delivered the opening lecture for the 1900-1901 season on "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ." The lecture—a fairly long one—was followed with close attention, and was evidently much appreciated. A considerable number of ladies were present, which was a very agreeable feature of the meeting.

Mr. Foote occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening (September 23), taking for his subject "Does Death End Us?"

Mr. Charles Watts had a capital audience last Sunday evening at his lecture in the Camberwell Secular Hall. We are informed that he was in his best form, and that his lecture was enthusiastically applauded. This evening, Sunday, September 23, Mr. Watts again occupies the same platform. This will be his last appearance at Camberwell at present.

We have had a visit from an old friend of Mr. Joseph Symes. He is over here on a visit from Australia, where he has been settled for fifty years. He is nearly ninety, but looks much younger. His name is H. G. Hodgson. He is a wonderful old veteran, and is still jolly and full of humor. This gentleman reports that Mr. Symes was looking as well as ever when he left him. He thinks the prospect is improving at Melbourne, and that the circulation of the *Liberator* is increasing. He says that Mr. Symes would much like to visit the old country again, but he wants a lecturer and editor to fill his place during his absence. Well, that is the difficulty. Mr. Symes might be brought over without a great deal of trouble, but we have no lecturer and editor at present whom we could export to Australia. We wrote to our far-off colleague after the Whit Sunday Conference, and we are expecting to hear from him daily. As soon as we do so, we shall see what can be done to make his proposed visit to England an actuality.

We are glad to hear that Mr. C. Cohen had very good open-air meetings on Sunday. To-day (September 23) he lectures at the Ridley Road Station, Kingsland. Time, 11.30 a.m. No doubt he will have a large audience.

Mr. Ward delivered his first address as a "Secular Education" candidate at Birmingham, in the Prince of Wales's Assembly Room, on Sunday evening. He was listened to very attentively by a large audience, and a vote of confidence was passed with only five dissentients. We hope he will come out as well at the poll.

Mr. H. Percy Ward debates with Mr. J. W. Mahony on the question of a Future Life. The discussion is to take place at Birmingham, in the Temperance Hall, Temple Street, on Monday evenings, September 24 and October 1. Mr. Mahony, who is a Spiritualist, will maintain that "The intelligent part of man survives physical death." Mr. Ward will maintain that "The present life is the only one of which human beings have any knowledge."

The *Freethinker* is folded this week, and will be so regularly hereafter. This is one improvement, and others are in contemplation. Henceforth, at any rate, subscribers will not have to complain that the paper comes into their hands in bad condition. The folding will be done by machinery at the printers, and this will reduce to a minimum the chance of copies being ill-used in transit and distribution.

The Conference on the question of "Secular Education" and the approaching London School Board elections, convened by the National Secular Society's Executive, took place on Tuesday evening, September 11, in the larger hall of the Club and Institute Union. It did not attract the attention of the London press, although one notice of it, and that a very good one, appeared in the *Echo*, and came, we believe, from the pen of a delegate. Still, the Conference itself was fairly successful. In addition to the N. S. S. Executive and some of its metropolitan Branches, several Branches of the Social Democratic Federation, the Metropolitan Radical Federation, and two Ethical Societies were represented. A representative of the Trades Council was present with a watching brief only. Mr. G. W. Foote was voted to the chair, and in a brief speech explained the object of the Conference. Mr. Cohen, on behalf of the N. S. S. Executive's sub-committee, moved the first resolution, which was seconded and carried unanimously. It ran as follows: "This Conference of London Societies is of opinion that, as an act of justice to all members of the community, and as the only method of effectively ending the religious controversy on the School Board, the time has arrived when the instruction given in Board schools should be completely severed from all forms of theological belief, and pledges itself to do all that lies in its power to return candidates at the forthcoming elections who will support the principle on the School Board of London."

Two representatives of Ethical Societies, including a daughter of the late Mrs. Harriet Law, tried to edge in a reference to "moral instruction," but the Conference refused to complicate the issue, and resolved to leave "moral instruction" for what it was worth, as a subsequent question.

Reference was then made to candidates already in the field who were pledged to support Secular Education, and the Conference resolved that the following four candidates should be worked and voted for by *real* Progressives—namely, G. Hewit (Tower Hamlets), H. Quelch (E. Lambeth), W. J. Barwick (Finsbury), and F. J. Jones (Chelsea). These candidates all belong to the Social Democratic Federation. Still, they should be supported by the friends of Secular Education, whether Socialists or anti-Socialists; for the only *actual* difference *now* between their program and that of the Chapel party—the so-called Progressives—lies precisely in this very article of Secular Education.

Mr. Thomas Shore moved, and Mr. F. Verinder seconded, a third resolution. Both held that it was too late to do much at the approaching School Board elections. They therefore proposed—"That a permanent committee be formed for the purpose of preparing the way for a determined and general fight for Secular Education at the elections of 1903." This was carried; but the appointment of the committee was left until another meeting of the Conference, which the N. S. S. undertook to call as soon as possible; Miss Vance, in the meanwhile, undertaking to act as secretary.

A hope was expressed that the N. S. S. would see its way to placing a candidate or two in the field, where none are yet standing in the interest of Secular Education. The matter was discussed two days later at a special meeting of the N. S. S. Executive. Mr. Cohen was asked whether he would stand as a candidate in some London division. He replied that he was not eager to do so, but he would undertake the job if they wanted him to. During the discussion it was held by several members that it was too late then to enter the lists with any chance of success. When the vote was taken, there were seven in favor of Mr. Cohen's standing, and seven against it. In these circumstances, the President thought the matter should be dropped, as it was hardly advisable to proceed without something like practical unanimity.

Should any enthusiastic friend of Secular Education be prepared to plank down £40 or £50, the President would not only get Mr. Cohen to fight for a seat in some London division, but throw himself into the struggle on behalf of his young colleague's candidature. It is impossible for Mr. Foote to stand for a seat himself. He has quite enough obligations already, and a seat on the London School Board involves two or three good days' work every week. The open Board meeting is a simple affair. It is the committees that call for so much time and attention.

The following is a complete list of the Societies represented at the "Secular Education" Conference:—National Secular Society's Executive, Edmonton Branch, East London Branch, Camberwell Branch, Bethnal Green and West London Branches, North Camberwell and Lansdown Liberal and Radical Club, Metropolitan Radical Federation, Bradlaugh Club, East London and South London Ethical Societies, London Centre S. D. F., Kentish Town Branch, Marylebone Branch, Clerkenwell Branch, Bethnal Green Branch, Clapham Branch, Stoke Newington Branch, Shoreditch Branch, North Camberwell and Mile End Branches, People's League, London Trades Council, and a representative of Mr. Barwick's Committee.

The *Shields Gazette* reports the funeral of Mr. John Lamb, notes that he was "very highly respected by a large circle of acquaintances," and refers to the presence of a "large gathering of relatives and friends" at his burial, where the Secular Service was read by Mr. S. M. Peacock.

We are always pleased to receive the *Freethought Magazine*, edited by Mr. H. L. Green at Chicago. It is one of our most welcome American exchanges. The September number contains a good supply of varied and interesting matter; not the least readable being the editorial "All Sorts." We note that Editor Green has still to solicit financial aid for his publication, and we hope he will receive it adequately until the magazine is self-supporting.

Mr. Foote's first article on "Shakespeare: the Man" is reproduced from our columns in *Secular Thought* (Toronto). Professor Goldwin Smith has long been resident in Canada.

In our next issue will appear a review by the editor of Mr. J. M. Robertson's new book on *Christianity and Mythology*. Mr. Foote will also contribute the first of two articles on Marie Corelli's new novel, *The Master Christian*.

Readers of the *Freethinker* are requested to bear in mind that we are still anxious to receive the names and addresses

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of newsagents who will display one of our weekly contents-sheets, copies of which are forwarded by post to such newsagents on Wednesday evenings from our publishing office. We should be glad if the friends who send us these names and addresses would take the further trouble to see whether the contents-sheets *are* displayed.

The Bible of Nature.*

FREETHOUGHT.

THE Brahmans have a legend that the first children of man ascended Mount Gunganoor, to visit the castle of Indra and inquire into the secrets of their origin. Speculations on the source of life, on the mystery of creation, the cause of good and evil, and similar problems which we might sum up under the name of religious inquiries, seem, indeed, to have occupied the attention of our ancestors at a very early period. An irrepressible instinct appears to prompt the free discussion of such questions, and in a normal state of social relations the attempt to suppress that instinct would have appeared as preposterous as the attempt to enforce silence upon the inquirers into the problems of health or astronomy. A thousand years before the birth of Buddha the Sakyas, or ethic philosophers, of northern Hindostan, visited the mountain-passes of Himalaya to converse with travellers and seek information on the religious customs and traditions of foreign nations. The book of Job, probably the oldest literary product of the Semitic nations, records a series of free and often, indeed, absolutely *agnostic* discussions of ethical and cosmological problems.

"Canst thou by searching find out God?" says Zophar. "It is as high as heaven: what canst thou do? It is deeper than hell: what canst thou know?"

"Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress the work of thy own hand?" Job asks his creator; "thine hands have made me; why dost thou destroy me? Thou huntest me like a fierce lion. Wherefore, then, hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh, that I had given up the ghost and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. Are not my days few? Cease, then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death."

And again: "Man dieth and wasteth away; man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fall from the sea and the flood dryeth up: so man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more he shall not awake nor be raised out of his sleep.....If a man die, shall he live again?.....Wherefore is light given unto them that are in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul? who long for death, but it cometh not; who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they can find the grave?"

Or Elihu's interpellation: "Look up to heaven and see the clouds which are higher than thou: If thou sinnest, what doest thou against *him?* If thou be righteous, what givest thou to him, or what can he receive of thine hand?"

Could a committee of modern sceptics and philosophers discuss the problems of existence with greater freedom?

For a series of centuries the monkish custodians of the literary treasures of Greece and Rome expurgated the writings of the bolder Freethinkers, and, for the sake of its mere parchment, destroyed more than one work that would have been worth whole libraries of their own lucubrations; yet even the scant relics of pagan literature furnish abundant proofs of the ethical and metaphysical liberty which the philosophers of the Mediterranean nations enjoyed for nearly a thousand years. The marvellous development of Grecian civilisation in art, science, politics, literature, and general prosperity coincided with a period of almost unlimited religious freedom. Speculations on the origin of religious myths were propounded with an impunity which our latter-day Freethinkers have still cause to envy. The possibility of all definite knowledge of the attributes of the deity was boldly denied two thousand years before the birth of Emmanuel Kant. The Freethinker Diagoras travelled from city to city, propagating his system of Agnosticism with a publicity which seems to imply a degree of tolerance never yet re-attained in the progress of the most intellectual modern nations. The sceptic Pyrrho ridiculed the absurdity of all our modern Secularists would include under the name of *other-worldliness*. A Roman actor was applauded with cheers and laughter for quoting a passage to the effect that "if the gods exist, they seem to conduct their administration on the principle of strict neutrality in the affairs of mankind!"

Democritus, Euhemerus, Anaxagoras, Epicurus, Aristotle, Libanius, Pliny, Lucretius, and the latter Pythagoreans, almost entirely ignored the doctrines of Polytheism, which, indeed, never assumed an aggressive form, the attempted suppression of the Christian dogmatists being an only apparent exception, dictated by motives of political apprehensions rather than by religious zeal; for, at the very time when the followers of the life-hating Galilean were persecuted as "enemies of mankind," a large number of other Oriental religions enjoyed privileges bordering on licence. The Grecian colonists of Asia Minor never interfered with the religious customs of their new neighbors. They studied and discussed them as they would study the curiosities of other social phenomena; and a purely naturalistic system of education would undoubtedly lead to analogous results. Intelligent children often evince a remarkable tact in avoiding certain topics of conversation, such as allusions to personal or national defects, scandals, the *arcana* of sexual relations, private affairs, etc., and the experience of after years may confirm such habits of discretion; but no conceivable motive but deference to an arbitrary precept could dictate a similar reticence in the discussion of purely metaphysical topics, or of dogmas which, by their very pretence to a mission of extreme importance, should justify an extreme frankness in debating the basis of their claims.

* From *The Bible of Nature; or, The Principles of Secularism*, by Felix L. Oswald.

Senator Hoar tells a very amusing story about Professor C. C. Felton's younger brother, who stood very high in the class at Harvard, but forgot himself so far as to use profane language. Young Felton, in consideration of being the professor's brother, received the mercy of private instead of public admonition, and the professor himself was commanded to administer it. He called the youth to his room and said: "John, I cannot express to you how horrified I am that my brother, in whose character and scholarship I have taken so much pride, should have been reported to the faculty for this vulgar and wicked offence." John said, with much contrition: "I am exceedingly sorry. It was under circumstances of great provocation. I have never been guilty of such a thing before. I never in my life have been addicted to profanity." "Damnation, John!" interposed the professor, "how often have I told you the word is profaneness, and not profanity?" The admonition ended there.—*Buffalo Courier.*

Captain Jack, the chief of the Modocs, gave the country a bad quarter of an hour, and was executed for it. A clergyman waited upon the tough old chieftain to offer consolation. He ended up a long exhortation by saying: "And if you repent of your wickedness in fighting good white men, the Great Spirit will permit you to go to heaven." With all the politeness in the world, Captain Jack inquired: "Do you think you will go to that place?" "Certainly," said the minister; "if I should die to-day, I would be there before night." Quick as a flash came the answer: "If you will take my place and be hanged to-morrow, I will give you forty ponies." The offer was not taken, and the clergyman sought heaven by a less direct route.—*Chicago News.*

Is God a policeman, that he is never around when wanted? In Worcester, Mass., on a recent Sunday, Theodore Plausse, a four-year-old boy, was burned to death while his parents went to church. The boy played with matches, igniting his clothes. His screams attracted the attention of his aged grandfather, who is a faith-cure advocate. The latter fell on his knees and prayed. While the boy's clothing was still blazing, neighbors broke in and put out the fire, but too late to save his life. And still the old man, and other old men and women, believe that God answers prayer.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

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Missions and Missionaries.

IT is a natural impulse of generous minds to desire to extend the benefits acquired by knowledge and experience to fellow-men living under less favorable circumstances, and this desire becomes particularly strong when the advantages are supposed to have reference chiefly to the condition of the individual in a future state of existence.

All developed religions have been more or less missionary in spirit, the most active in proselytizing being the Buddhistic and the Christian. Buddhism is purely benevolent; its chief glory consists in its entire freedom from the persecuting spirit. Christianity, being founded upon the principle that those who do not believe shall be damned, is apt to display an aggressive disposition in trying to enforce its creed upon unwilling or recreant subjects. However, the prevailing animus is supposed to be an unselfish desire to rescue benighted human beings from ignorance and sin, and secure for them after death a place in the Christian heaven, where they will be blessed and happy for ever and ever.

In former times, when the Christian inhabitants of Europe and America knew comparatively little about remote countries, and still less about the origin and history of their own religion, it was natural that individuals among them should be fired with zeal to "save souls," and should go forth upon what they considered a sacred errand, taking their lives in their hands and avowing themselves ready for any sacrifice which might be involved in that untried and hazardous enterprise. It was also in the nature of things that societies should be formed at home for the direction and maintenance of these missionaries of the gospel, and that pious persons living in civilised countries should give of their substance to their wandering brethren exposed to suffering and danger for the Lord's sake.

The records of these spiritual pioneers, especially the Jesuits, are full of instances of individual heroism and of single-hearted zeal in what was then the only way to further what seemed a righteous cause. But all that is different now. The application of scientific discoveries and inventions to practical uses in steamboats, railroads, etc., has opened the whole world to our knowledge; the extension of commerce has tended to civilise formerly savage peoples, and assimilation between alien races proceeds gradually and naturally through the frequency of travel and the mutually beneficial interchange, not only of material products, but also of customs and ideas.

The International Conference of Religions, held in Chicago at the time of the World's Fair, ought to have opened the eyes and the minds of Christians everywhere to the fact that human beings can be physically healthy and intellectually wise and morally good without the help of Christianity, and that each branch of the human family must be left to develop itself according to the conditions of its being. Considering the time and money and labor expended in attempts to convert what we call "the heathen," the result is wofully small in numbers and, for the most part, inferior in quality. The majority of real or pretended converts are attracted by the temporal advantages of the change, and where the improvement has been made it is mostly apparent in the adoption of better methods of living, which have no connection with religious beliefs. The most successful missionaries are those who possess medicinal and surgical skill. Ignorant natives everywhere are ready to crowd around a stranger who relieves their sufferings and heals their diseases without money and without price; but here, again, the benefits conferred have nothing to do with Christianity, and the influence of the benevolent missionary does not usually reach beyond the physical needs of the grateful recipient. And why should it?

It is all very well for a foreign intruder to justify his presence by dealing out pills and potions to suffering neighbors, but he has no right to choke his Bible down their throats by way of recompense for his trouble. In fact, this "carrying the word of God to the heathen" is, in the light of our present knowledge, a great impertinence, and is regarded and resented as such by the most intelligent endurers of the nuisance. These people have their own Bibles and their own deities, which are as sacred to them as ours are to us, and have as much foundation, in fact; the believers in them will by degrees recognise the falsity of such creeds, just as we are beginning to do; there is really no need of our teaching fellow mortals another faith which they must later unlearn and renounce. Not many years ago a Christian missionary, on his way to India, fell in with an intelligent and educated native, who listened politely to the stranger's exposition of his doctrines, and then replied: "If your chief argument is the incarnation of the Son of God, you are wasting your time in coming to India. That is an old story with us. Almost every village boasts of a divine incarnation."

There we have the secret of missionary failures, as well as obvious proof of the needlessness and absurdity of missionary endeavors. We break into foreign dominions to teach the inhabitants our way of viewing things, which is not necessarily the best way, and now that they know more about the working of our system at home they are less than ever disposed to follow our lead. We condemn the oriental harem, and the orientals point to the prostitutes who swarm our streets; we are horrified at opium smoking, and they are horrified at whisky drinking; we call them lazy and deceitful and superstitious, and they call us cruel and treacherous and superstitious. It is evident that whatever prestige earlier Christian missionaries may have enjoyed and profited by through the ignorance of the people to whom they ministered is now withdrawn, and, what is more injurious, not only to the cause, but also to the safety and welfare of the nations which persist in sending them where they are not wanted, is the growing recognition on the part of the natives that worldly interests are mingled with spiritual zeal, and that the attempt to overthrow their national religion means also a desire to appropriate their national dominions.

For many years the troubles in Eastern countries have been largely due to complications arising from the encroachments of the missionaries who have become more bold with the extension of their activities through the immense resources furnished by the societies at home. It is no wonder that Turkey delays and hesitates to comply with the arrogant demands of America in reference to a matter which certainly has two sides. It is no wonder that China is rising up to rebel against the aggressions of foreign armies which are invading the empire under the pretence of protecting a band of religious interlopers who have no business to be there. If the present dangers can be conducted off, so as to result merely in the permanent abolishment of the Christian missionary system, it will be a boon to the whole civilised world and a powerful guarantee for universal peace among the nations. ELIZABETH E. EVANS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Tolstoi on Missions in China.

THE husband believes in Confucius. The religion of his forefathers is the one sacred thing of which he is supremely conscious. Behold the wife of his bosom a proselyte—twice a Christian, for the female proselyte's ardor is without bounds, it knows no reason. Man and wife each think the other eternally lost. Everything that he considers permissible, lawful, good, is a crime in her eyes—a terrible, dangerous error, at the very least.

He thinks her faithless, a traitress to his ancestors; she calls him blind, walking in eternal darkness. And when they meet in the common evening prayer, holy to the memory of their beloved dead, then the husband prays to them as to his patron saints, while the wife mourns them as sinners and lost. The husband thinks them in heaven; the wife believes them to be in hell's deepest cavern. So the Christian world has gained a soul, and society one more broken and unhappy marriage! Woe to the family torn by fanatical, religious strife.

Do you wonder that the missionaries were the first to suffer by rope, by the stake, and by torture when the slaughter of foreigners began way down in China? They were killed for revenge—as professional arch-destroyers of the family—the Chinese holiest of holy. The missionaries carry on their propaganda mainly among women; that means they set wife against husband. The Chinese regard them as immoral. They go further—they call us liars for saying that our God makes us love all men as brethren, while at the same time we treat the Chinese as dogs.

—*Chicago American.*

The Church and Children.

WE have become so accustomed to the religious lie that surrounds us that we do not notice all the atrocity, stupidity, and cruelty with which the teaching of the Church is permeated. *We* do not notice it, but children do, and their souls are irreparably maimed by this teaching. We have but clearly to understand what we are really doing, when we teach children so-called religion, in order to be appalled by the dreadful crime thus perpetrated. A pure, innocent, and as yet undeceived and undeceiving child comes to you, to one who has experience of life, and who possesses, or might possess, all the knowledge now accessible to mankind—and inquires about those fundamental truths by which man should be guided in life. And how do we answer him? Very often, indeed, we do not answer, but anticipate his questions, so that he may be provided with an incited answer ready for the time when his question arises. But that is not the case. The child has a vague idea of that source of all, that cause of his existence, that force in whose power he finds himself, and he possesses the elevated idea of this source—indefinite and inexpressible in words, but of which his whole being is conscious—natural to all rational men. And suddenly, instead of this, he is told that this source is nought else but some sort of personal, self-willed, and dreadful evil being—the Jewish God.

—*Count Tolstoi.*

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Who Will Answer Prayer?

A Congregational Minister Who at Last Sees the Truth that the Providence of Man is Man.

The Rev. William T. Brown, of Plymouth Congregational Church, in Rochester, N.Y., has reached and announced the conclusion that prayer to God is superstition, and that we must look to human association for the accomplishment of all good things. In a recent sermon on the text, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" he asked the question, "Who shall answer our prayer?" and spoke as follows:—

"The one thing that perpetuates prayer in the sense in which that word is used in the Bible is the assumption that there is a supreme being who possesses all power, who is able and willing to answer human petitions, and whose one purpose is to do right. The significance of that fact is not due to the mere circumstance that it appears in the Bible. It is due rather to the fact that it still characterises the bulk of the human race. Mankind cherishes to-day almost as generally as it did 2,000 years ago this faith that there is a supreme judge who will do right. That is the faith which accounts for these churches and temples scattered by the thousands all over the earth. That faith is implicit in all our religious services, in all the activity of our missionary societies, in almost innumerable actions of our life and customs of our civilisation.

"It is hardly necessary to multiply illustrations to establish the truth of this assertion. This is a world of prayer. Our hymns are all prayer. Our Sundays are days of prayer. At least once every seven days millions of voices are mingled together in prayer for almost every conceivable thing.

"And is it not true that nowhere in all human experience is such earnestness, such longing, such whole-souled concentration of mind and will and affections, to be found as in this act of prayer? It is at the supreme moments of our life that we pray—at the moment of our highest happiness and at the moment of our deepest sorrow. Here at this very moment, while we are under this roof where hundreds of prayers have been uttered, all over our world are men and women of all races and religions pouring out their souls in an agony of prayer; the millions of starving people in India praying for food; the Boers praying for their independence; the Filipinos praying for deliverance from what they regard as an oppression; fathers and mothers with streaming eyes and breaking hearts beseeching God to spare the lives of their dying loved ones.

"Let it be freely admitted that prayer has fulfilled a useful function of the life of men. No doubt that thousands of men and women have been better for their praying. Prayer has made men brave in battle. It has afforded relief to human hearts in times of sorrow and danger and loss. And yet it rests, as we all know, upon a pure superstition. No amount of praying will make the slightest difference in the lot of the starving people in India. There is no judge of all the earth to do justice for them. They will echo this cry in vain. Millions of them are dying, and many millions more in the years to come are going to die of famine, and their prayers are no more effective than the blowing of the wind. No God can do anything for them. If they are ever to find relief, if they are ever to find the fulfilment of their hopes and prayers, that fulfilment must come by human hands. To many millions of them such fulfilment can never come. No God has so far put in an appearance who can hear the cry of starving India. No God exists who can do anything for them.

"The prayers of the Boers are also vain. Had they not perfected themselves in the use of the rifle, they would have been reduced to subjection long ago. All their praying is of no avail. Their nationality is a thing of the past. No such thing as a Boer Republic will ever again be heard of. A few years hence not a hundred men will be found outside the survivors of the two African Republics to regret their extinction. The faith of those men is a delusion. No one questions its sincerity. No one will dispute the depth and earnestness of their religion. But it has no foundation laid deep in eternal truth. The God to whom they have prayed does not exist.

"Here are men and women praying for rain, beseeching the Almighty to save them from drought. And they still remain outside our asylums for the insane! Does anyone believe their prayers will have the slightest effect on the weather? Certainly not. And yet it lies within the power of the nation, within the power of organised society, and nowhere else, to determine that question, to answer those prayers. We are only reaping what we have sown. In pursuit of gain we have not hesitated to denude our land of its great forests, and we are slowly coming to see that, by that process, we are making disastrous changes in the distribution of moisture over this continent. So have flood and drought and cyclone followed in the footsteps of our national avarice, until we find ourselves face to face with many grave problems. But we are also discovering that it is perfectly possible for us to remedy this condition of things and solve our problems.

"We are discovering slowly, and it is highly probable that in the future we shall make far greater progress in that respect that man is the real master of nature, that nature has been waiting for man to assume his rightful place before responding with her greatest resources. No sensible person believes that we have gone beyond the kindergarten stage in the discovery of the forces of this world, and in the mastery of those forces. The coming centuries are, no doubt, to witness the operation of a vaster chemistry than any other has so far been dreamed of. It is a mistake to say that we are the servants of nature. Such a position is contrary to all reason. And we shall some time know that it is truer that men make climate than that climate makes men. The science of forestry is, in the near future, to answer our prayers for protection against at least two great calamities. A knowledge of the laws of health and the laws of sanitation, and the establishment of normal and just conditions of labor and recreation and leisure, will, beyond all question, solve many another problem over which men and women in other days were accustomed to pray.

"What this world needs to-day, and what each individual in it needs, is sanity and light. We need to put it far from our minds that we are violating some divine law when we affirm the supremacy of man. We are simply asserting the divinest law the human mind can conceive of. We men and women can make the sovereignty of love and the reign of justice a reality. Within ourselves, and not elsewhere, does that sublimest possibility lie. Not in the skies, not in the life to come, nor in any reputed representative of Jehovah, for no such representative exists, nor ever did exist, but in humanity. We men and women have it in our power to determine and establish what is right. We men and women are clothed with the only divine attributes that exist, or ever can exist. We men and women can answer every genuine prayer that swells in our hearts. We men and women are in our corporate capacity as the people, as humanity, as a nation, as society, the manifestation in time and on the earth of omnipotence and infinite benevolence. In our hands, on our souls, rests all that tremendous responsibility which we have been wont to invest the being of a God with. To human association, and to that alone, are we to look for the accomplishment of any just or loving purpose in this world."

Correspondence.

"CHRISTIAN FALSEHOODS."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—I have been away from London on a holiday, or should have written sooner in reference to your remarks which appear in the *Freethinker* dated September 2. Let me at once say that I had no wish to "waste" your space, but only desired to present the facts as I understood them. But as you have criticised my letter without publishing it, I now venture to ask you to insert these few lines in reply to that criticism.

(1) You write: "It is nonsense to repeat that Dr. Horton's sermon may have been published without his knowledge or sanction in such a journal." I assure you it is *not* nonsense; it is the truth. The sermon, unless I am misinformed, appeared entirely without the Doctor's sanction, and, therefore, the accusation of "deliberate falsehood," made by Mr. Cohen, is quite unwarranted and unjustifiable.

(2) My statement, that Darwin was "at least a nominal Churchman," is *not* "a falsehood" of mine, or the "careless echoing of a falsehood of someone else," as you assert. It is Darwin's own admission, which you will find by referring to his *Life and Letters*, vol. iii., p. 178.

(3) Speaking of his Christian burial, you observe: "He was dead then. That farce was arranged by others." Well, when living, he did not regard it as a "farce." In a letter to his friend, Dr. J. D. Hooker, when writing of Lyell's burial, he said: "I am deeply rejoiced.....and nothing could be better than Westminster Abbey" (*Life and Letters*, vol. iii., p. 197). As Darwin thought that nothing could be better than for Lyell to be laid in the great Christian Abbey, what right is there for the suggestion that he would have wished for something else for himself? A. H. Tabrum.

[This correspondent seems to think that repeating nonsense makes it less nonsensical. We care nothing for his mysterious "information." If the report of the sermon by Dr. Horton was unauthorised and inaccurate, let Dr. Horton disavow it. Until he does so, we attach no importance whatever to Mr. Tabrum's explanations. With regard to Darwin, he *was* a nominal Christian in his early days, but not after the age of forty. We have his own word for it, in his Autobiography, that he ceased to be a Christian and became an Agnostic. Sir Charles Lyell was a Unitarian, and his burial in Westminster Abbey was not such a farce as that of Darwin.—Editor.]

Minister—"I am sorry I didn't see you at church yesterday, Tummus." Tummus—"Weel, ye see, it wis siccan a wat day it wisna fit to turn oot a dog in. But I sent the wife, sir."—*Tit-Bits.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Does Death End Us?"

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Watts.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3.15, C. Cohen.

FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, A. B. Moss, "The late Charles Bradlaugh and Colonel Ingersoll."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, E. Pack; 7.15, W. J. Ramsey. September 26, at 8.15, R. P. Edwards.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Mr. White.

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. Schaller.

WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 11, S. E. Easton; 7.30, F. A. Davies.

HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, F. Schaller.

KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. Percy Ward—11 (Bull Ring), "The Coming School Board Election"; 7, see Saturday's *Daily Mail*. Mr. Ward will lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8—weather permitting.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, E. M. Pack, "Pious Sceptics."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, S. Reeves, "Education."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Mr. Lill, "Robert Owen, the Precursor of Social Progress."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Readings.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—September 23, m., Ridley-road, Kingsland; a., Clapham Common.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.:—September 23, a., Victoria Park. October 7, a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—September 23, Birmingham; 24 and October 1, Debate in Birmingham. December 9, Glasgow.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—September 23, e., Stratford.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Theology and Geology.

THE name of Geneva calls up three ideas—theology, gin, and watches. The city used to provide western Europe with religion; it now provides it with time-keepers. Standing upon the bridge, the traveller sees before him the water of the lake in the loveliest shades of blue. Right and left rise steep banks, covered with vineyards; and behind them, on the one side, are the white peaks of Mont Blanc, on the other the dark ridges of the Jura. Three hundred years ago Calvin saw this landscape. Looked at it with the dull, unappreciative eyes of the theologian; and saw not its significance, saw not its lessons. For theology is a barren study which explains nothing and teaches nothing. Ask the theologian about the origin of yonder mountains, and you will find that he has not yet soared above the puerile mud-pie theory. He will tell you that the "creator" at the moment of creation piled up these rocks, partly to amuse himself like some gigantic baby, partly to impress mankind with the spectacle of his omnipotence. The Mohammedan will tell you that the creator made the earth a flat disk, and then threw the mountains upon it to steady it. Neither of these paltry theorists is aware that the structure of mountains entirely disproves his theory, if he only took the trouble to look at it. For the strata of mountains consist of precisely the same elements as the strata of plains, and were laid under the same conditions. The mountains are simply parts of the plain which have reached their present level by the persistent action of blind natural forces. Mountain, lake, and all, are the product of natural causes. Calvinism itself is the product of natural causes. If John Calvin had not suffered from indigestion, we should never have heard of Calvinism. If he had been a healthy man, he would probably have been an Atheist. He had a brother who did not suffer from gastric troubles; and that brother narrowly escaped burial without the rites of the Church. The forces of nature, unguided and unlimited, produce all we see around us. If you wander by the seashore and pick up a pebble, perfectly round and beautifully polished, you do not invoke a supernatural being to account for it. Even the theologian nowadays admits that the "creator" did *not* fashion that pebble upon a lathe, but is content to refer its form and polish to the fact that it has been rolled among the other pebbles for long years by the action of the waves and tides. If we go along the bed of a stream, and observe that the flatter pebbles in it are arranged like the tiles of a house, with the ends pointing in the direction of the flow of the water so that the pebble is not easily washed out of its place, it is evident that the "creator" has not laid out the stream bed, but that the pebbles have been rolled down by the water until they have at last assumed a position in which the stream has little or no power over them. If we turn from pebbles to more complex matters, we shall still find that they owe their present appearance to the surrounding natural forces; or, to use the language of modern science, the condition of everything is determined by its history and its environment.

It is not yet a century and a half since people began to seriously investigate the problem of the origin of mountains. The first observers, still dominated by the idea of a *deus ex machinâ*, supposed that mountains were thrust up from beneath by volcanic agency; and in proof of this they pointed to the fact that their central cores and highest summits consist of plutonic rocks. But if these central cores had been burst up in a molten condition like lava it would naturally have baked and solidified and modified the other rocks through which it passed; whereas it is not found that such is the case, and, in fact, there are many phenomena which go to prove that these central plutonic cores of the Alps reached their present elevation as masses of solid rock many ages after their formation. During the last sixty years, therefore, geologists have more and more regarded mountains as due to the various strata having been thrown into folds by side pressure, not to any force acting from below. This may seem an astonishing hypothesis; but it is a perfectly natural thing. When an apple is fresh its skin is filled out, and is smooth and shining; but when an apple is dried its surface is wrinkled into hills and valleys. These hills are not due to any force existing in the interior of the fruit. The fact is that, in drying, the apple has become smaller, and the surface has to accommodate itself to a lesser space, which it can only do by falling into wrinkles. Similarly, we can understand that, as the earth gets cooler and cooler, it tends to shrink in size; and, therefore, as the surface contracts, certain parts get thrust up by an irresistible force. This contraction of the earth's crust has been going on for ages, and the consequence is that layers of deposit thousands of feet in thickness have become contorted, crushed, and twisted, in forms familiar to geologists; and, where the direction of pressure has been favorable, mountains have been forced up. These mountains have had their summits attacked and abraded by atmospheric agencies, and layer after layer removed, until, at the present day, all except the plutonic core has been worn away. Thus Mont Blanc, which at present stands 15,000 feet high, must have had 15,000 feet of strata worn off its top before the present masses of gneiss showed themselves upon the surface. Mountains, therefore, are merely the remains of old wrinkles upon the crust of the earth; and we can well understand that the same forces are still at work, and fresh mountains are rising. As we stand upon this bridge at Geneva, though everything looks solid and feels stable, Mont Saleve, to the left of us, is slowly rising, those long ridges of the Jura are being gradually forced upwards, and Geneva is being elevated heavenwards. These forces have been acting for millenniums, and will act for ages more; for the laws of nature follow out their courses in entire indifference to the futile dreams of theologians, and without caring whether John Calvin's miserable soul was predestined or elected. "Revelations" tell us nothing of the earth's history. The Pentateuch speaks of the "everlasting hills," the Hebrew prophet of "everlasting mountains." The "inspired" writers were not aware that hills and mountains are far from everlasting; they left it for the infidel scientists of the nineteenth century to trace the birth and the death of hills; for the history of the earth cannot be learnt by thumping of pulpits, but only by the study of nature.

Calvin saw, as we do, that there are no villages upon the Jura range. He probably knew, as we do, that there are no villages because there is no water. The rain falls upon the just and the unjust, and it also falls upon the Jura mountains. But owing to the geologic conditions the summits of the Jura are disintegrated by the gradual pressure which is urging them upwards, and so the rainwater sinks in, only appearing in springs at the base. The same cause gives constant trouble to the French railway engineers, for no tunnels are safe in those mountains, as the traveller at Bellegarde can see for himselt.

Calvin saw the blue lake of Geneva, and thought it

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presented the same appearance as it did at the "creation." Little he knew that the lake was geologically recent, and that the history of the locality before the formation of the lake was to be traced by the educated eye. It was not until men disregarded the assertions of ignorant theologians that they found out anything which was worth knowing. While theology was weaving its ropes of sand nothing could be learned, nothing could be proved. We are only just emerging out of the fogs of superstition, and catching gleams of the sunshine of nature. Chillon Castle at one end of the lake has been a prison for men's bodies; Geneva city, at the other end, a prison for men's minds.

CHILPERIC.

Christianity and Mythology.

Christianity and Mythology. By JOHN M. ROBERTSON. (London: Watts & Co.)

"AN author," said Coleridge in the preface of *Aids to Reflection*, "has three points to settle: to what sort his work belongs, for what description of readers it is intended, and the specific end, or object, which it is to answer." Mr. Robertson has settled the first and third points, but he has paid little regard to the second. His book would have been far more effective, and therefore useful, if he had kept some particular class of readers in mind. After all, one writes to be read, and different circles of intelligence, or at least of information and receptivity, should be differently addressed. What is too prolix for experts may be too terse for the comparatively ignorant. When an Ingersoll writes he is able to express himself with universal suitability; but that is because he deals only with principles and ideas, and because he has a consummate command of lucid language with a natural gift of style. It is quite another case when a writer has to argue recondite questions and present a vast body of facts and illustrations. The importance then arises of settling Coleridge's third point—of deciding who are to be addressed. This *has* to be done upon the platform, where a speaker can perceive whether he is being followed and understood. But a worker in the literature of information, particularly, is always in more or less danger of forgetting to put himself, so to speak, in the place of his readers. What is clear enough to him, because he knows all about it, may not be so to them, for the opposite reason. Long familiarity may enable him to weigh the facts as well as count them, and it is easy for him to overlook the truth that most of his readers do not enjoy the same advantage. We venture to say that the general reader, who has some acquaintance with the subject, will find Mr. Robertson's book rather difficult; on the other hand, we think it is too minute and diffuse for those who have made the subject a special study.

We have another criticism to offer. Mr. Robertson would be none the worse for a little "reverence" in his composition. There is something comical, occasionally, in his lordly treatment of his predecessors and superiors. He seems to know precisely where everyone is right, and where everyone is wrong; and his praise, censure, or correction is commonly administered without a shadow of diffidence. We are far from saying that Mr. Robertson is conceited; in the ordinary sense of the word, we should unhesitatingly say he is not so. But he seems to us to be conceited of his opinion; in this resembling a greater Scotsman, the late Thomas Carlyle. Of course it is hard to suppress a strong constitutional tendency, but the more it is kept under the more Mr. Robertson gains in persuasiveness. Infallibility is good business in the Catholic Church, but a most unamiable foible in one who makes no claim to inspiration.

It is a pity, too, that Mr. Robertson's writing is generally so unmelodious. Printing is a mechanical thing. The spoken word is primary. However quickly we read, the ear is always more or less active behind the eye. Flaubert held that the supreme test of style was whether the composition would bear reading aloud. The application of that test to Mr. Robertson's writing would sometimes result in sheer violence to the organs of speech. In this respect, nearly every author he quotes from is an improvement upon himself. Now and then he is quite slipshod. Such an expression as, "he did much to clear up the scientific ground as far as he did go," could easily be mended by a schoolboy. It is not that Mr. Robertson is incapable of doing better. He is very capable if he only takes the pains. Perhaps the truth is that he writes too much, and has a too facile pen, with the result that his sentences stand as they first occur to him, instead of being turned over in his mind in the interest of clarity and elegance. It should never be forgotten that easy reading is hard writing; and there is a world of truth in the reply of a certain scribe, who, on being told that something he had written was too long, said that he had not time enough to make it shorter.

Having got rid of the unpleasant part of our task, we hasten to say that Mr. Robertson deserves very great credit for the learning, industry, candor, courage, and penetrating intelligence, which he displays in this book. It is a work that few men could have accomplished. That he has done it is a distinction. That he has done it so well entitles him to something more than the respect—to the gratitude, of Freethinkers.

Mr. Robertson expresses the fear, in his Preamble, that his own book, like others less drastic, will gain but a cold reception. Ecclesiastical defence, he says, represents at bottom the "organisation of an economic interest." Learned divines—there are still a few—will not answer what they do not wish the public to read. His book should appeal to "serious and open-minded laymen."

> "Unfortunately the open-minded laity are in large part satisfied to think that traditionalism is discredited, and so take up an attitude of indifference to works which any longer join issue with it. None the less, those who realise the precariousness of modern gains in the battle against the tyranny of the past must continue the campaign, so doing what they can to save the optimists from, it may be, a rude awakening."

We are glad to see Mr. Robertson taking his forceful share in continuing the campaign. The service of every soldier of Freethought is as requisite as ever. Christianity is a huge vested interest, in full possession of the field by inheritance from the ignorant and superstitious past. It still controls education, and thus manufactures supporters. And the great mass of the indifferentists, who do not go to church or chapel, read very little but trash, and would hardly count in any life-and-death struggle between the forces of progress and reaction.

The first part of Mr. Robertson's book is, in some respects, a masterly account of the Progress of Mythology. The second part deals with Christ and Krishna, and pretty thoroughly (we think) establishes that the Hindu myth was in no way borrowed from the Christian story, being in its essence the older of the two. A laborious confutation of Western pretensions was perhaps necessary, and Mr. Robertson has done it once for all. Christianity itself has been the great borrower. Having been "manufactured within historic times," as Mr. Robertson observes, its processes can be traced, and we can see how it selected its material from the common stock of oriental mythology. Otherwise, the "borrowing" argument might be pressed unduly. The material environment is essentially always the same, and human imagination has its laws as well as human reason; hence the mythology of the race, in certain stages of its development, has a wonderful, but after all a very natural, similarity.

The third part of Mr. Robertson's book, on the Gospel Myths, is in our opinion the most important, as it is the best written. It is really a strong and thorough piece of work. After a severe criticism—severe in the sense of being courageous and exhaustive—the view is reached that "there is simply nothing left which can entitle anyone to a belief in any tangible personality behind the name" of Jesus. Mr. Robertson holds that the Christ of the New Testament is as mythical as the other legendary founders of religious institutions. After going over the ordinary ground of the Gospel *story*—or rather stories—he devotes a special division to the Myths of Doctrine, thus carrying the war into the enemy's last citadel. Mr. Matthew Arnold dismissed all the supernaturalism of the Gospels, and staked everything on the *teaching* of Jesus. Mr. Robertson deals with this carefully, and argues that the sayings

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are as mythical as the life. The Sermon on the Mount, for instance, besides being "extremely unfit for oral communication to a popular audience," is demonstrably as much a collection from Jewish and other Eastern ethics as the Lord's Prayer is a *cento* from the prayers current amongst the people of Israel. Mr. Robertson's conclusion is this :—

> "The Christian cult is literally the work of many generations ; and though it may be arguable that certain men, as Paul, were specially active in promoting the mere external acceptance of it, it is here maintained that there is no ground for ascribing any of its special doctrines, any section of its Gospels, to any man whose name has been preserved. Alike the worst and the best are the work of men who elude our search ; and both alike are clearly within the power of many nameless men of the ancient civilisations."

We might suggest that a parallel—not exactly close, but close enough—may be found in the history of the great Christian cathedrals. There are legends about their erection, but we do not know who built them. They are monuments of the skill, and zeal, and labor of nameless workers, probably through several generations. Christian story and Christian doctrine were built up in the same way. The identity of the builders is unknown ; they worked under the impulse of certain ideas, and were probably careless about celebrating themselves to posterity ; and such names as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are legendary afterthoughts, which were found serviceable in giving an historic air to what was merely a patchwork of fiction.

We repeat that the final section of Mr. Robertson's book is an extremely valuable piece of work. It is replete with information, its method is admirable, its composition is flowing and lucid. The writer grasps his subject and interests his readers. He walks firmly and confidently on comparatively fresh ground. We have unqualified admiration for this part of his performance. If his book contained nothing else, this alone would entitle it to a distinguished place in the literature of Freethought. G. W. FOOTE.

Belief, not Inquiry.

WHATEVER professed Christians may say to the contrary, there is no doubt in my mind that the majority favor blind belief in their teachings rather than patient investigation into the truth and value of what they seek to inculcate. It must not be overlooked that, while Secularism encourages the fullest untrammelled investigation into the claims of all religions, Christianity is opposed to the free examination of the credentials of that which they term "the one thing needful." The basis of the Christian faith is belief, not inquiry. Orthodox Christians can consistently say, in the words of Bacon, "We love better to believe than to examine." The language of the New Testament is, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel"; those "that believe are justified from all things"; "Believe on Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; "For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." St. Paul prayed that he "may be delivered from them that do not believe." He designated unbelievers as "proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strife of words.....from such withdraw thyself." "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Surely it cannot reasonably be contended that such teachings as these can in any way favor free inquiry. They have been relied upon for centuries by professed Christians to justify the ostracism they show to unbelievers, and the tortures and death inflicted upon heretics.

The free pursuit of truth has been productive of so many advantages to the human race that whatever tends to limit its operations should be condemned as inimical to general progress. Unfettered inquiry is so essential and valuable to individual and national advancement that to some it may appear as a waste of time to offer arguments in its defence. But, as James Napier Bailey truly wrote :—

> "Though there are few hardy enough to deny the abstract right of man to inquire after truth, there have not been wanting persons who, at different times and in various countries, have endeavored to prevent certain classes of mankind from exercising this privilege. The tyrant has immured in a dungeon the political philosopher who has dared to expose the corruption of courts, and to impart information to the people respecting the maladministration of political affairs. The priest has denounced, anathematised, and incarcerated the man of science who has had the presumption to think for himself respecting matters of fact, and the boldness to make the results of his inquiries known to the world. And, copying the example of the tyrant and the priest, many persons in what are called the lower walks of life have endeavored to impede the progress of knowledge by throwing obstacles in the way of those who have determined to seek it at all hazards."

Unfortunately, such retarding influences are not yet altogether extinct, and, but for the power of Freethought, no doubt the same evils would now be more prevalent than they are. It is through relying upon the dictates of reason rather than following the impulse of blind faith that we owe the exemption which obtains from priestly interference with, and from theological power over, the free exercise of our mental faculties. The great obstacle to the acquirement of truth has been Christian bigotry. Buckle wrote : "Real knowledge, the knowledge on which all civilisation is based, solely consists in an acquaintance with the relations which things and ideas bear to each other, and to themselves ; in other words, in an acquaintance with physical and mental laws." The history of the orthodox religion proves that the object and aim of its advocates have been too frequently to discourage and prevent the acquisition and dissemination of this knowledge.

It has been contended by some that reason is fallible, and, therefore, not a trustworthy guide in religious matters. If this were so, it would disparage the value of that faculty which Christians erroneously boast God has given to man above all other creatures. Of course, it is not here contended that all men are guided by reason. If they were, there would not be so many victims of superstition in our midst. Ignorance, bigotry, and prejudice may, and do, hide truth from the light of reason, as sure as a defect in the eye obscures the recognition of the true light of nature. This will account, in some degree, for the fact that, with many persons, reason is no factor in forming and maintaining their religious views, while with the same persons this faculty is of the greatest service in their business pursuits. It is granted that some men are incapable of properly weighing evidence and forming a sound judgment upon religious belief. Hence they are apt to form a low estimate of the greatest faculty which should adorn the animal kingdom. Besides, if reason be, as some assert, "a divine gift," those who use it should be deemed the noblest of our race. It is not overlooked that many persons urge that it is not the province of reason to be the judge of "divine things"; the Bible, it is alleged, supplies that function. The first statement is probably true, for reason has failed to throw any light upon the nature of those much-talked-of "divine things." But the last allegation, if true, casts a grave reflection upon the supposed giver of reason. If Revelation is our sole guide upon religious subjects, then it can be of little service to those whose reason cannot comprehend it, and also to those who have never seen nor heard of it.

To me it appears absolutely absurd to appeal to incredible evidence to prove an incredible doctrine. To prove anything implies a process of thought with a view of discovering that which is reasonable. The promise of heaven or the threat of hell is not evidence of the truth of any doctrine. If such promises and threats sometimes influence the minds of believers, is it not what we should call, if applied in secular affairs, bribery and intimidation? Such means may lead to a confession of faith, but they afford no proof of the truth of what is professed. It, therefore, appears inevitable that whoever accepts Christianity in the light of reason must perforce recognise the necessity of natural evidence similar in kind to that which determines the mind on other subjects. But would not this compel the rejection of the greater, and, from a Christian standpoint, the most important, part of Christianity—namely, the supernatural and the miraculous? Christianity teaches that, if we fail to believe, we are to be damned hereafter.

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This makes all inquiry a farce, inasmuch as it determines that we have no choice in the matter. The decree of the New Testament is that all must believe one thing; therefore, a man cannot select even the religion he prefers, to say nothing of testing its truth. St. Paul's injunction to "prove all things" is of no value if it be true, as he states, that "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." This renders inquiry upon our part entirely useless, as the ability to arrive at any conclusion rests not with us, but with a God, we "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." If this is Gospel truth, Christianity can be no friend to free inquiry. We know, however, that whatever reason pronounces to be false no Scripture and no Acts of Parliament can make true. All that threats and force can effect is to induce men to repeat, like parrots, articles of belief, and to act as hypocrites.

From what has here been said, it must not be inferred that I regard all who profess Christianity to be either destitute or incapable of logical deductions. I know many Christians who hold similar views to myself as to the process by which men arrive at beliefs and opinions. But it will be found, on strict examination, that theirs is an eclectic Christianity—that is, they accept only such parts as appear to them to be true. Such people consider that uniformity of opinion is not to be expected when probability is the only ground upon which a belief is based. The state of society most desirable is that in which the holding and avowal of all opinions shall be allowed, without any evil consequences accruing to those who entertain them. Such a condition of society we have not at present. Those who are acquainted with orthodox Christians have doubtless discovered that they hold the most imperious notions of their own views, while they deem the opinions of those who differ from them as beneath contempt. On all hands devout professors of Christianity deplore the state of mind of those who, after proving the grounds of their belief, fail to hold fast the Christian view. The Secular motto is justice and freedom for all in the pursuit of truth, and, therefore, in the words of Pope, I say:—

> For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight:
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

Charles Watts.

The Priest and the Child.

(Concluded from page 594.)

The next reply made to such as object to the existing arrangements under which religious instruction is given in the public schools is that there is a special provision made for the protection of such objectors, in the shape of a conscience clause. Any parent is at liberty to withdraw his or her children from religious instruction by the method of filling up a printed form to that effect. This, it is often said, provides ample protection for the conscientious objector.

But, if the compromise is unjust, the conscience clause is both unjust and ridiculous. In the first place, the mere existence of the conscience clause is a practical surrender of the claim that some form of religious instruction is indispensable to the child's future welfare. If the duties of citizenship cannot be adequately discharged in the absence of religious beliefs, then every reason that will warrant the State teaching other matters will also warrant it teaching this. The presence of the conscience clause is a tacit admission that religious beliefs are not essential to the child's future welfare, and thus removes the only logical reason for making them part and parcel of the school curriculum.

The matter of a conscience clause is peculiarly objectionable in the case of Voluntary schools. Here the avowed reason for the opening of the schools is that, in the opinion of their managers, education is robbed of its chief value if divorced from religion. Yet they are willing to hang up a conscience clause, to convert the school into a purely secular establishment for five-sixths of the school time, to confine the religious instruction to a brief period at the beginning and end of the school time—thus, on their own showing, rendering their schools inefficient—and all for the purpose of earning the Government grant. If they were really and honestly consistent, Voluntary school managers would refuse to hang up the conscience clause, and forfeit the grant; but that, perhaps, is too much to expect. And we, the public, while admitting the educational inferiority of the Voluntary schools, yet, as John Morley said, "permit the clergy and their patrons to bribe us with a fraction of voluntary subscription to allow them to prevent a certain number of children from being well instructed.....We sell the chances of the young for the thirty or more pieces of silver of the system which is absurdly called Voluntary."*

In the next place, the conscience clause, even if a legitimate device, is largely inoperative. Whether the fear be rightly or wrongly based, and there is only too much cause for believing that in many cases the fear is justified, it is yet a fact that large numbers of parents do object to withdrawing their children from religious instruction, because they are of opinion that such a step will make their school life irksome and obnoxious—not always as the result of any action of the teachers, but often because of the petty tyranny that children know so well to exert one towards the other. But even if this were not so, the conscience clause does not, and cannot, satisfy the demands of the most elementary principles of religious equality or of social justice. To compel all classes of non-Christians to pay towards the teaching of Christianity is bad enough, but to imagine that the injustice is abolished by the simple expedient of saying, "We insist on your paying towards this religion being taught, but we are gracious enough to allow you to do without it if you are so inclined," reveals a depth of stupidity or knavery which reflects little credit upon such as speak in this manner. Churchmen might with equal logic retort on the Dissenters who object to Church rates: "Well, but you need not come to church unless you like." What is objected to is not only getting the religion, but also having to pay for it. We have no intention of questioning the right of parents to give their children whatever religious instruction seems to them best; only we submit that along with the right to teach it goes the duty of paying for it. As things stand at present, Christian parents not only claim the right of selecting the religion, but also that of compelling all others to contribute to its support.

No one put the absurdity of a conscience clause, as designed to meet the injustice of religious instruction in the schools, more clearly than did Sir William Harcourt. Speaking in the House of Commons on March 10, 1870, he said:—

> "I confess that this conscience clause has always seemed to me an imposture and a sham, and I believe that the day is tolerably near when it is about to be found out.....What is a conscience clause? You tell us, on the one hand, that religion is the basis of all education, and we accept that statement, and establish religious schools. You say that it is the greatest and most important of education, and then you give effect to your declaration by telling the children when they come to school: 'You must not fail to attend to reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography, but there is one subject which you may entirely neglect if you please. When religious instruction is about to be imparted, if you object to the teaching, you may go out and play marbles in the gutter.' It is now what it always has been—an irrational method of defending and propping up an indefensible system of denominational education. You choose to devote a certain portion of money raised from the public to the support of an educational system in which all cannot share, and you are consequently compelled, having begun by a political injustice, to cure it by a religious, or rather an irreligious, absurdity."

Clearly there is only one way to deal justly by all classes of the community, as well as to put a stop to the quarrelling and ill-feeling engendered by the present arrangement. And that is to keep the schools for their legitimate object, and the teacher to his legitimate task. We are not all interested in theological questions; we are all interested in seeing that each child gets, as far as lies in our power to secure it, a fair grasp of the rudiments of the information that the race has gradually acquired. And even those who are interested in theological questions might well pause and ask themselves

* *Struggle for National Education*, p. 123.

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whether it is not straining the power that a parent wields over a child by forcing upon its mind as *facts* beliefs which even Christians will admit may be mistaken. A child does not discriminate between different sets of teachings; it accepts all with equal trustfulness; and it is surely an outrage upon its innocence and trustfulness to put before it, as upon exactly the same level of certitude, the existence of heaven and the antipodes, the doubtful stories of religious speculation, and the certainties of science or sociology.

It is not that we who are opposed to religious instruction in the public schools wish to impose upon others views that they do not believe in. To do so would be simply to change the position of the injured parties. We do not propose to teach children that Christian doctrines are either true or false. We say the public school is not the place in which to conduct an anti-Christian propaganda, and, for the same reason, it is not the place in which to teach Christian doctrines. What we would have is to leave such teaching, *pro* and *con.*, until the child is old enough to understand it—or, at least, if parents will have it, let it be taught at their own expense and under their own conditions. But while we are not agreed concerning theological subjects, we are all agreed as to the necessity of teaching children reading, writing, arithmetic, history, the first principles of science, etc.; and, therefore, it is our plain duty to restrict the school curriculum to that which *all* parties are agreed upon is necessary to the child's future welfare, and not to occupy the best half-hour or more of the school time—the period when the scholar's mind is clearest and brightest—with teachings with which a section only are in agreement.

In what has gone before I have restricted myself to a statement of the case against religious instruction in the public schools, which is quite independent of any particular view of Christianity, either for or against. On the grounds of social justice and of social expediency, I hold that there is ample reason for excluding the Bible from the schools. But it is obvious that an equally strong case may be drawn up, based upon the nature of the instruction given and the character of the book upon which it is based. That the Bible contains stories and phrases revolting to modern notions of decency, that the supernaturalism with which it is permeated is equally objectionable from a purely intellectual standpoint, are statements that few educated Christians even will care to deny. Of course, adults may apologise for these stories on the ground that such free expressions and such supernaturalism are common to all peoples in the earlier stages of their development, and the plea is sound enough so far as they are concerned. But children come under an altogether different category. They are not taught, nor would it be advisable to teach young children, all that they may learn concerning the Bible as they reach maturity. The Bible is before them in a place of superiority over all other books; they are taught that it is "God's word"; that it contains the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; while the real truth concerning the book has to be slowly learned in after years, often at the cost of pain and heartburning.

The late Dr. Martineau was not a man whom one can honestly say was an enemy to the Christian religion, or a friend to what is known as Secularism. Yet he was driven to the following statement concerning the influence of Bible-reading on children :—

> "To parents, then, who would guard the moral purity of their child—who would not wish him to find access anywhere to impressions and premature knowledge of wrong, from which they would shield him in a novel or a tale; who would dread his contracting a sympathy with ferocious and intolerant passions; who would maintain his estimate of duty wisely graduated, and not suffer him to confound secondary with primary obligation.....who would mix no taint of selfishness with his morality, of ignoble despondency with his conceptions of life and death—will be cautious in their use of the ancient Scriptures, and permit no unregulated access to them within their house. Of course, there will be a clamour; but their duty is not to the bigot neighbor, but to the child at home."

The soundness of Dr. Martineau's contention would be further enforced by an examination of any of the Scripture syllabuses issued either in London or the provinces. The whole are permeated with the miraculous, with the supernatural. One provincial syllabus that lies before me as I write simply bristles with miraculous stories—the feeding of the five thousand, the story of the demoniac boy, the raising of Lazarus, etc. Others are content to instruct the teachers to give the "leading facts in the life of our Lord," which either means teaching miracles that are discredited by modern thought, or it means nothing.

There is, as a matter of fact, no real reason for retaining the Bible in its present position in the public schools, save one—the interests of a class demand it. The fight of the clergy for the schools is the fight of a huge corporation struggling with all the energy of threatened vested interests to retain the only sure method of manufacturing clients. Let this be clearly understood by all. The contest between church and chapel is not an educational contest in any real sense of the word. It is a struggle between two rival forms of supernaturalism, either of which is willing to sacrifice the real welfare of the children in the interests of their organisation, both of which are equally objectionable to the non-believer, and either of which is willing to trample underfoot every principle of social justice, should occasion demand it.

How long is this iniquitous condition of things to obtain? We compel the teachers—a large number of whom would gladly drop the religious instruction altogether—to give instruction which many of them believe to be false or injurious; we force upon the child teachings the falsity of which it is bound to perceive as it reaches maturity, and which are admitted to be open to question even by those who believe in them; we inflict an injustice upon a large and growing section of the public; we commit an unpardonable offence against the innocence and truthfulness of the child, and all that the interests of church or chapel may be promoted. Is it not high time that we took a saner view of the educational problem? Is it not time to recognise that the teaching of fantastical religious utterances or theosophic doctrines is not education at all. It neither trains the mind nor does it inform it. It merely converts the brain into an intellectual lumber room that has to be cleared before useful work can be done. Let those who would have religious instruction have it by all means. But let it be at their own expense and in their own establishments. Let us keep it out of the public schools, and keep the child free from the designs of the priests of all denominations. Let there be at least one place where the jangling of the sects is silenced, one place where the child may learn the simple lessons of honesty, truthfulness, justice, where it may be taught the plain lessons of individual and social prosperity, freed from the presence of designing priests or deadening creeds.

C. COHEN.

Obituary.

IT is my painful duty to record the death of Thomas Anderson, aged 65 years, late of New Springs, Ashbull, Wigan, Lancashire, who died at Heaton, Newcastle, on September 14. Deceased had recently been living at Sheepwash, near Morpeth, and was bringing his furniture to Heaton to reside there, when he unfortunately met with an accident by falling from the cart, which resulted in death. He was an ardent Freethinker, often travelling miles to attend lectures. His desire for a Secular burial was carried out by Mr. R. Mitchell reading the Secular Burial Service in an impressive manner to a large number of friends. Interment took place at Heaton Cemetery on September 18.—J. G. BARTRAM.

From the moment that religion seeks assistance from philosophy her downfall is unavoidable. She strives to defend herself, and always talks herself deeper into ruin. Religion, like all other absolutisms, may not justify herself. Prometheus is bound to the rock by a silent power. Æschylus represents the personification of brute force as not speaking a single word. It must be dumb.—*Heine.*

Life in itself is neither good nor evil; it is the place of good or evil according as you prepare it for them. And if you have lived one day, you have seen all; one day is equal to all other days. There is no other light, there is no other night. —*Montaigne.*

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Acid Drops.

IVAN CHEN, secretary to the Chinese Minister in London, sent a capital letter to the London *Daily Mail* in reply to Mr. Julian Ralph's article on "All the Trouble in China." The *Mail* did not "like either the tone or the matter" of the Celestial's reply, which contained "many unnecessary sneers at Christianity." Poor dear Christians! How sensitive they are! How they writhe when a little—ever so little—of the sauce with which they dish the "heathen" is poured over themselves! Mr. Ralph described the way in which the ignorant Chinese scare away devils, partly by means of empty beer-bottles. Well, said the bland Celestial, supposing this is all true, are there not ignorant, superstitious people everywhere, and is not an empty beer-bottle "as good for keeping off devils as the largest bells ever erected in any tower"? A hit, a hit, a palpable hit! No wonder the *Mail* is wild.

The bland Celestial goes on to say that China contains nine times as many people as the United States, but they don't spend nine times 200,000,000 dollars a year in "propitiating their gods and devils." They do it just as effectively for less than half that sum. Good, thou bland Celestial, *very* good! You are too many for these Christians. They could do with half your cleverness.

Then the bland Celestial goes on to explain that the educated, intelligent people in China follow the teaching of the great Secular philosopher, Confucius. "Confucius," he says, "has taught us to respect our ancestors and leave the gods alone. Confucius teaches us to have nothing whatsoever to do with anyone who pretends to have any intercourse with the supernatural." We have amongst us, however, he says, a silly lot of people called Buddhists, who have "a religion almost identical with the Christian religion," and the trouble in China is just what would happen in England if Buddhist missionaries tried to supplant the Catholics and Protestants. "Suppose," he says, "a Chinese priest should come to England, and it should be known that every burglar, pickpocket, and thief, by becoming a Buddhist, would become exempt from arrest by the police. Suppose that the introduction of a new faith into England should give the criminal classes license to ply their trade in London with complete immunity from the action of the laws. Would the English people submit to such a state of affairs?" Certainly not. Then why should the Chinese? Finally, the bland Celestial says that China wants our science, and wants to trade with us, but doesn't want our missionaries. What is more, she won't have them. And that is all there is in it.

Sir Robert Hart, whose name has figured so largely of late in connection with China and its troubles, was in early life connected with a Methodist New Connection Church in the county of Antrim. When the church celebrated its centenary a little time ago, he sent home a letter which has now been published. He recalls in it various features of the early services, including the singing of "that very pathetic tune":—

> I'll creep before Him as a worm,
> And see Him die for me.

The tune may have been pathetic, and so, in a sense, are the words. Is it not painful to think of the mean and grovelling spirit they represent? And this is Christianity!

Mr. Julian Ralph recently published a stinging criticism on missionary methods, entitled "Women who make trouble." He showed how in China "irritation began with antagonism to missionaries," and how women missionaries most of all contrived to stir up native ill-will. Now, a writer in the Evangelical weekly, *The News*, objects, from another point of view, to women being allowed to enter the mission field—at any rate, that of China.

"I see," he says, "that the Protestant missions in Pekin are re-organising their work. I have also noticed the predominance of women among the murdered missionaries. I think it is time for someone to make a protest against the presence of women in the mission field in China, with its sporadic outbursts of massacre and outrage. There is a form of martyrdom which no woman should seek, and no man help her to obtain, and risks which no enthusiasm justifies for a woman. Of the selfishness which brings women and little children into such places much might be said. But it behoves all the Churches to see that they offer their women-martyrs no such palm as this intolerable one."

Little Johnny Kensit is haunting Newcastle-on-Tyne during the sessions of the Church Congress. He is evidently more cocky than ever—which some of us thought impossible. His handbill is headed "Kensit Crusade in Newcastle." Underneath we read, "Protestantism before Party Politics." Yes, but Kensit before everything else. At the bottom of the handbill we read, "Protestants, Awake! Remember the Martyrs!" But this is not sufficiently precise. It does not say whether the martyrs to be remembered are the Protestants burnt by Mary, the Catholics burnt by Elizabeth, or the Protestants *and* Catholics who were impartially burnt by Henry the Eighth. Perhaps little Johnny is only conversant with the Protestant martyrology, and fancies that everybody else's information is equally limited.

"We know what we are, we know not what we may be," says poor Ophelia. True, and life often looks strange when viewed in the opposite direction. Joseph Chamberlain was once a Sunday-school teacher.

Rev. Marcus Rainsford, a Church clergyman, says that when he was at Brixton Church the great Spurgeon would sometimes lunch with him on Sunday. Both were smokers, and Spurgeon would ask God to bless their evening services, putting down his cigar meanwhile, "so that it should not go out." What a touch! Dropping his cigar to address God Almighty, and making careful provision to resume smoking directly the Lord has done listening! Only Nonconformist piety is equal to these things.

Yarmouth Sabbatarianism found a fresh victim in Alfred Jay, a fruiterer, who was fined five shillings and costs for selling pippins on the Lord's Day. He explained that he merely sold some fruit to a poor excursionist, who wanted it for his half-a-dozen children. He told the bigots that he would do the same thing again, and that they were making themselves the laughing-stock of the world. Whereupon the chairman called upon the police to turn him out of court. Alfred Jay, who is no "jay" after all, planked down his fine, etc., and said, "I go with pleasure."

Palmists have been heavily fined at Bournemouth and Dewsbury. How is it, asks the writer of a certain leading article, that these far-seeing people cannot anticipate the visits of the police? A most pertinent question, which may be recommended to the attention of their dupes.

True to its superstitious traditions, the Roman Catholic Church offered strong opposition to the cremation of the body of the young man Molloy, who died of the plague at Glasgow. We read that the body still lies in a hermetically-sealed coffin in the mortuary. What is to become of it we are not informed. Perhaps the matter will be settled some time next century. Meanwhile the Roman Catholic Church may well congratulate itself on its power to over-ride common sense and social safety.

"God forgive me," wrote Richard Carter, an ex-schoolmaster, before committing suicide at Wimbledon. The jury found that he was temporarily insane. We should think so. The poor fellow was hopelessly in trouble, and it was a sign of insanity when he asked forgiveness of the God who had driven him to despair, or left him in it without the slightest assistance.

Rev. C. M. Sheldon, the *What Would Jesus Do?* man of God, who came over from Topeka to help the Christian Endeavorers in London, seems to have carried a drop in his eye all the time he was here. Perhaps it was because he is a teetotaller, and lives in a Prohibition city. He appears to have seen drunken people everywhere; he was insulted in cars, jostled on railway platforms, and forced off the sidewalk by drunkards. It is all very absurd, of course; but what accuracy can be expected from a silly dreamer like Mr. Sheldon; a dreamer, by the way, who still retains a keen eye for the main chance?

There is, at least, one Church of England clergyman who has a belief—indeed, an awe-stricken belief—in the existence of the personality of the devil. He "believes and trembles." This clerical fossil is the Rev. G. W. Butler, of Broad Mayne, who ventilates a grievous complaint in the *Record*. He seems almost afraid to mention the devil by name, but delicately alludes to him as the "enemy of God and man." And his complaint is that "an insult to high heaven" has been offered in the "profane title" familiarly given to the 14th Middlesex (Inns of Court) Volunteer Battalion—namely, "The Devil's Own."

One may well ask, where the devil does the "profanity" come in, in this free use of the devil's name? The rev. gentleman hopes that the colloquial title of the battalion—"so horrible and wicked"—has never received official sanction, as if these military nicknames ever did. How, he asks, could anyone approach the throne of a holy God with a prayer that he would prosper the warfare of a battalion with such an appellation? The *Record* adds a note unctuously hoping that someone will write to the War Office or to Lord Wolseley. Then there would, indeed, be some sulphurous language which we should like the rev. gentleman to hear.

The clergy make a great profession that their "high and holy calling" is to save souls. But they won't undertake the precious work unless they are paid—especially if the souls

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to be saved are merely those of paupers. Kendal Board of Guardians have declined to accede to the Local Government Board's request to appoint a paid Anglican chaplain, on the ground that the inmates are free to attend any place of worship they like. Some Church members, we learn, used strong language in reference to the reluctance of the clergy to give voluntary service in the workhouse. Of course, it would involve only a trifling overtime that could be run in with their other work for which they receive stipends. But no; their valuable services, even to that extent, are not to be given "without money or without price."

The Bishop of Ripon says he is "tired of hearing the average clergy run down." Then why doesn't he induce them to brighten up? As some sort of answer to that question, he says he is arranging in his diocese for instruction, by means of lectures, to be given to the clergy in scientific and other questions. They want it.

The *Western Morning News* recently published a letter from a correspondent, who wrote: "In this town (Torquay) we have suffered during the past few years from the abject twaddle talked by the mission preachers in the pulpits of our churches during Advent and Lent, and at other times. So much so, indeed, that it now only suffices to be known that one of these gentlemen will occupy the place of one of our esteemed vicars to ensure a scanty congregation. Their sermons may usually be characterised as full of emptiness, illogical and disconnected rant, and of immoderate length."

Upon this no doubt well-deserved "slating" the *Church Gazette* observes: "Many people will fully sympathise with the griefs of Torquay, because the trouble is general rather than local."

What is described as a "regrettable" incident occurred in College Free Church, Glasgow, the other Sunday. It was only the "chucking out," by the minister's orders, of a beloved brother in Christ. It seems that the pastor took up into his pulpit some objectionable pamphlet that had been circulated on the Union question. He was commenting upon it, when a member of the congregation ejaculated: "That's not true!" The minister stated that, if he were interrupted in that way, he would call on his Kirk session members to eject the person. He repeated his assertion, and was met with the same statement, whereupon Dr. Reith called upon the session to "eject that man." The person proved to be an influential member of the church, who consented to leave quietly. He was joined by another gentleman, and both, with their families, walked out of the church.

The Free Churches are arranging a Simultaneous Mission, which is to exhibit the features of "new century revivalism," and is announced as a "grand assault on Indifference." Well, the indifference of the masses to the religion of the Free Church, or any other variety, will stand a good deal of assaulting. We learn from the *Christian World* that it is to be "a mission with an ethical rather than a purely theological basis. The day has gone by when lurid pictures of the wrath of God against rebels and luscious descriptions of the joys of heaven were the chief stock-in-trade of the successful missioner. Missions on that basis might be effective among the ignorant, who could be touched only by playing on the primitive sensations of the uncultured; but even with such people the effects were merely ephemeral, enduring only while the induced state of transient emotional excitement lasted. To-day, and with people who read and think, the appeal must be to the higher intellectual faculties rather than to the lower sensations."

And it will be just because an appeal is made to "the higher intellectual faculties" that the mission may be expected to prove a big failure. Christian missions are not to be conducted on these lines—at least, with any success.

The Rev. E. Cornwall-Jones, preaching at Pwllheli, said he felt that the supreme need of Wales to-day was an *ethical* revival—less of theology and more of rigorous morality. He witnessed something the other day which would have been impossible in England; he met a party of intoxicated working men who were singing the hymn, "Bydd myrdd o rhyfeddodau." He would much rather have heard them singing some ribald music-hall chorus than outraging religion by such incongruous hymn-singing.

The celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the unity of Italy, with Rome as its capital, in spite of the opposition of the Vatican, was an immense success. Rain fell in the morning, and the clericals said it was "the finger of God." But the sun came out brilliantly in the afternoon. We suppose that was the finger of the Devil.

"No one visibly present but myself." That, according to a clergyman who writes to the *Church Times*, is the sum-total of the attendance at his performance of daily morning and evening prayers in his church. He qualifies the statement by saying that this "is the rule." The exceptions are mainly when members of his own household are able to be present. Still, he glories in the fact that every day he attends at his church, and reads the morning and evening prayers, from the Lord's Prayer to the Third Collect, whether anyone is there to hear or not.

He begins this cheerful monologue entertainment by ringing the bell himself, then he dons his priestly raiment, faces the empty church, and solemnly proceeds with his appointed task. With delightful naivety, he says: "I do not feel at all lonely." He is not disconcerted by the fact that when he offers his priestly salutation, "The Lord be with you," no answering "And with thy spirit" reaches his bodily ears. The Lord is there, with attendant angels, and possibly the "spirits of just men made perfect." Truly, somewhat of a farce, with, alas, no takings at the door.

As all things are possible with the Lord, he may have no difficulty in interpreting the following, which is the chorus to "Climbing up the Golden Stairs" done into the Zulu language:—

Ngi ya kupukela ezulwini
Umqele wami upambi Kwami
Ngi hamb' eku eKanyeni
Ngi hamb' imini nohusuku
Ngiyu ku memeza nga mandhl' ouke.

Bishop Selwyn, it is said, one day seized a few minutes' much-needed sleep on the bench of a little roadside station in Derbyshire, *en route* for a confirmation. A lady of some social distinction, but terribly nervous, and her daughter were on their way to the same rite, the daughter as a confirmee. Running to the solitary porter, the lady implored him not to go away, as they were afraid to pass the drunken man on the platform. To this the porter replied in solemn tones: "If you please, my lady, it's the Lord Bishop!"

Ah, those were happy and holy days! If the *Times* newspaper was delivered at a house by post on Sunday morning, it would be laid aside; even the letters would not be read on Sunday, and all the meals were taken cold. Such was the state of things in the boyhood of the Bishop of Barrow, and he sighed over its disappearance at the recent Carlisle Diocesan Conference. One can imagine his look of pain when the Rev. C. T. Duesburg mentioned that nowadays at Barrow, on a fine Sunday afternoon, a thousand excursionists go by rail to the Lakes, and 4,000 or 5,000 go across the channel to Walney Island. May we not look for Divine vengeance on such terrible sin?

Many people have gone to sleep in church, and many more, no doubt, will continue doing so. But the most extraordinary sleep in a "sacred edifice" is that of a girl named Freeman, of Foleshill. She fell asleep in chapel the other Sunday, and all efforts to arouse her failed. She continued asleep for days afterwards, and, for aught we know, may be asleep now. Surely it must have been an exceptionally soporific sermon.

Says Mr. Joseph Hatton, in his *Cigarette Papers*: "There is talk of a movement to discontinue the Sunday band at Cromer next season; but it is to be hoped that common sense will continue to prevail against the tyranny of a miserable bigotry that by now should be as much out of date as the stocks and the thumbscrew."

The Rev. D. Stewart, of Hawick, is terribly distressed at the sale of Sunday newspapers in his town. He says it is "a desecration of the Sabbath, and dishonoring to God." His real trouble, however, is jealousy—pure jealousy. He cannot bear to think that the sermons of the weekly newspaper should prove more interesting than his own.

Bury Nonconformists, says the *Umpire*, are disturbed at what they call "the growing disregard for the Sabbath" manifested by some of the local shopkeepers. So they ask the churches and schools to deal with the subject in a special manner. This means, presumably, that congregations and scholars will be instructed in the kind and gentle art of doing all they can to prevent a few small tradesmen from turning an honest penny on Sundays. Nonconformists working to compel others to conform to their views is a pretty paradox.

A new light has been thrown on the falling off in Sunday-school attendance. It is suggested that the summer treats have not proved satisfactory of late years to the juveniles. Like their elders, they expect to be rewarded for their piety—otherwise they are "not taking any now, thank you."

Religious mania has indirectly been the cause of a tragedy at Sir Edgar Brehm's Sussex residence, Bramlands, Woodmancote. One of Sir Edgar's guests—Mrs. Bertha Seymour Dowling—shot herself on the lawn in front of the house. The only assignable cause is that her husband was confined in a private lunatic asylum suffering from religious mania.

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The nauseous cant of British clerics in connection with the Transvaal war is finely satirised in a little book called *Songs of the War*, by Mr. A. St. John Adcock, which has just been published. Here are two stanzas :—

Lord of the conquered land we gain,
Lord of the foe our hands have slain!
Glory to Thee amidst the dead
That Thou hast still Thy people led,
And shattered thus, O Lord benign!
This people that was also Thine.

. . . . . .

Lord of our silence and our speech!
While to Thy throne our hymns upreach,
Surely each blackening wound that gapes,
Here in these broken human shapes,
Mouths but its praise of all Thy powers!—
Thou wert their God no less than ours.

A notorious character of the sanctified type recently organised in Southwark a mothers' excursion professedly in connection with St. George's Church. Some thirty-three mothers were taken in by the swindle, paying 3s. each, and then having to provide everything for themselves. He promised to take them into our lord's house. The magistrate's clerk inquired whether he meant the residence of a lord or a church. Witness : He said a lord's house. The Stipendiary : Did he take you into a big house? Witness : He took us into a public-house. It was further said that he asked them to pretend to be Roman Catholics for two hours. Unfortunately there did not appear to be enough evidence to convict, and the canting humbug was discharged.

The insanity of religion has been illustrated anew in Rochester, N.Y. A band of persons styling themselves Gospel Workers, and irreverently spoken of as "Holy Rollers," has been camping out at Cobb's Hill, just south of the city line, for several days. They have about twenty-five tents under the trees, and a large tent on a slope is stretched over the platform. The theory of the sect is that each person has more or less of the Devil in him, and that the way to get rid of this evil spirit is to roll it out. When their prayers have not succeeded in eradicating the Devil and his works, they throw themselves upon the ground and roll about until they are exhausted. On Friday night the emotions of the "Rollers" were aroused to a very high pitch. A young woman who has taught school, and is a graduate of one of the normal schools, became frenzied. The meeting broke up, and the "Rollers" had to restrain her by force from doing herself bodily harm. She was taken to one of the tents and fastened with ropes. She is religiously insane, and reported to be in a serious condition.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Edward Spencer, a prominent farmer, of Trenton, New Jersey, takes the Bible view of his authority over his wife. A court of justice has fined and imprisoned him for whipping her ; but he will carry the case to the higher courts, with a view to establishing St. Paul's doctrine that "the husband is the head of the wife." The most curious feature of the case is Mrs. Spencer's admission that according to the Bible her husband was bound to castigate her. Her complaint is that he went beyond the bounds of moderation.

Father Reiss, of St. Liborius Church, St. Louis, U.S.A., has taken a leaf out of St. Paul's book. The great apostle was "down" on women who wore short hair. He liked to see it long, and he turned his own taste into a divine ordinance. Father Reiss, however, does not aspire to be a ladies' hairdresser. He is concerned about their raiment. During the hot weather even the lady members of his own church have been wearing network shirtwaists. This fashion he regards as distinctly immodest, and he declares that he will stop it, even if he has to refuse the sacraments to the female culprits. Well, we believe he will lose in this struggle. The clergy have always been very busy over the tuckers-and-petticoats question, but the ladies have always had their own way in the end. Besides, why should a Catholic priest bother his head about such matters? He is sworn to celibacy and chastity, and is as much out of the running as a eunuch.

"The demand for Miss Marie Corelli's new romance, *The Master Christian*," her publishers advertise, "is unabated. One hundred thousand copies were printed before publication, a number by far the largest on record. It is evident that even this enormous number will be quite insufficient to satisfy the public demands, and a new edition of 25,000 is being prepared. Such a success is unparalleled in the history of fiction." Very likely. But there are various kinds of "success," and Messrs. Methuen and Co. are no doubt speaking commercially. Perhaps they know as well as we do, if they cannot afford to say so, that a great sale is not the necessary sign of a great book. Notoriety is not even popularity. Miss Marie Corelli will, we hope, pardon us for reminding her that the Jesus Christ whom she worships (and exploits) did not get £6,000 for any or all of his compositions. Judged by the standard of her publishers, he was a most miserable failure. The Jewish mob howled at him, his own apostles forsook him and fled when he was arrested, and he died alone on the cross, except for the company of a couple of thieves. Evidently the "Christianity of Christ" pays a great deal better now than it did then.

A correspondent of the *Daily News* says that Mr. Sankey composed a certain hymn tune "as the Holy Spirit gave it to him." This is surely a new theory of musical composition. If the Holy Spirit gave that tune to Mr. Sankey, it must have been a double and treble distilled Holy Spirit that gave Beethoven one of his sonatas, or Wagner one of his Lohengrin or Tannhauser movements, or Chopin his haunting funeral march, or Mozart the lovely airs of his operas. Perhaps it was the opposite party, Old Nicholas, who gave tunes to Offenbach and Sullivan. On the whole, however, we fancy that neither the Holy Spirit nor Old Nicholas had anything to do with the matter. Sankey's tunes, in any case, are hardly worthy of either party.

Willesden has a population of 128,000. Civil marriage is, of course, legal there as it is elsewhere, but those who want to enter into the holy bonds of matrimony that way experience much difficulty. They have to travel three miles to Hendon, and on arriving there they find that the ceremony has to be performed in the *workhouse*. This is one of those pretty little tricks by which people are jockeyed into getting married in a church, and it is worthy of the religionists who give it their countenance.

If the accounts of Russian barbarities in China are true, or one tenth part true, it is perfectly clear that these Christian brutes are the vilest hypocrites on earth. They are doing deliberately, and in cold blood, the very thing which the "Allies," including Russia, are bent on punishing the Chinese for doing under the influence of a passionate fanaticism, and on a much smaller scale. Scores of hamlets in flames, men butchered by the thousand, women and children cut to pieces ; such, according to report, is the Christian method of avenging the martyrdom of a few missionaries. "I came not to send peace, but a sword."

The Cowboys and the Preacher.

In the early days of Garden City district, in South-west Kansas, I was camped one night, sleeping under my buggy, in Kearney county, south of Hartland. There were five of us in the party. We were all sleeping, and our campfire had died down, when one of our number was awakened by a cowboy, who wanted to know where the big preacher was. I was pointed out, and awakened by a shake of his foot. He asked : "Are you a preacher?"

"I am," I replied.

"Well, hustle out ; we want you to come to our camp and give us a chapter of the everlasting."

"I will be down in the morning," I replied.

He pointed his gun at me, and said : "You will come now."

I immediately answered : "All right."

I hurried out, and followed him nearly a mile away to a camp where I found his comrades were waiting.

"Well, boys, what do you want?" I asked.

"The best you have in the shop, and we want it short and sweet, and in old Methodist style," answered the leader.

"Then sit down," I said, "and, as I cannot, you must sing."

They sang with great vigor, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." When I prayed, I coupled prayer with watching, believing that, under the circumstances, the two should go together. I then preached them a sermon from Revelation iii. 20, entitled "The Ladder to Glory." I have often used an hour on this sermon ; but, as the boys wanted it short, I gave it to them in about twelve minutes, and then bade them good-night and started for camp.

"Hold on, come back here." They all seemed to speak at once. "We never let a preacher go off in that style ; Pete, you take up the collection."

And Pete seemed to understand his work as steward, and turned me over eleven dollars.—*Rev. A. P. George.*

Betwixt Vice and Virtue.

Why, then, eternal punishment for the temporary offences of so frail a creature as man?.....Heaven and hell suppose two distinct species of men—the good and the bad ; but the greatest part of mankind float betwixt vice and virtue. Were one to go round the world with the intention of giving a good supper to the righteous and a sound drubbing to the wicked, he would frequently be embarrassed in his choice, and would find the merits and demerits of most men and women scarcely amount to the value of either.—*David Hume.*

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Special.

The FREETHINKER has been for several months, and is still, published at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed. Readers are warned against sending orders to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. Those premises have for some time been definitively closed, and Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, who cannot be answerable for anything sent to him.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 30, Glasgow.

October 7, Manchester; 14, Athenæum Hall; 21, Birmingham; 28, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—September 30, Athenæum Hall. October 7, Athenæum Hall; 9 and 10, debate at Bolton; 14 (Sunday), Bolton; 21, Birmingham; 23, 24, 25, and 28 (Sunday), Glasgow and districts. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

G. J. WARREN (E. London Branch) thanks A. E. Embleton for a parcel of clothing for distribution.

S. BURGON, a lady Freethinker, writes:—"I am sending you £1 towards the Twentieth Century Fund. If I were a millionaire, you should not want for funds. I earnestly hope you may live to a good old age, for the sake of your wife and family, and no less for your own sake and the good of the cause you have so much at heart. I am also taking another Share in the Freethought Publishing Company, and am sending remittance in full for same to the Secretary." We like to read such letters as this. We should also be glad if all Freethinkers were as liberal, proportionately, as this correspondent.

H. W. JONES.—The *Freethinker* advertisemeet scale is printed every week on the ninth page, at the end of answers to correspondents.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—J. Hughes, 10s. 6d.; S. Burgon, £1; F. Rogers, 5s.; G. Harlow, £2.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

G. PARSONS and W. G. GILES.—Please note that Lecture Notices, and all other things meant for the *Freethinker*, should be sent direct to the editor, not to Miss Vance.

F. P. STERRY, 2 Briar-road, Twickenham, a member of the Camberwell Branch, thinks that a Branch might be formed to do good work in his locality, and would be glad to hear from Freethinkers there who are willing to co-operate.

M. E. PEGG.—Reply will be sent shortly.

H. LEWIS.—We do not think you understand Christianity. You pick out a few texts that please you, and call that the religion of Jesus Christ. We have no quarrel with your own sentiments.

E. R. WOODWARD.—We are glad to hear that Mr. Wilmot's experiment on Clapham Common has been so far successful, and that Mr. Cohen had a large and friendly audience there on Sunday.

F. J. GOULD.—All right. Mr. Foote will send along subjects in good time.

T. H. DUKE, M. BROWN, and others, are notified that their Shilling Week subscriptions will be acknowledged next week, and their letters noticed.

H. R. CLIFTON.—See answer to E. R. Woodward. Pleased to hear the supply of literature will be arranged to equal the demand at future meetings. Also glad that you are interesting yourself in the work.

W. H. W. asks us to send a *Freethinker* contents-sheet to his newsagent, which shall of course be done. "I not only," this correspondent says, "buy an extra copy myself, but have persuaded my newsagent to put a copy of the paper in his window, promising to take it myself if unsold. By this means he has made a new customer, and now promises to expose a bill."

J. G. BARTRAM.—Excellent work. We tender you our best thanks.

F. RYAN.—Received with thanks, and will appear in our next issue.

RECEIVED.—Public Opinion—Two Worlds—Free Society—Truth-seeker (New York)—Crescent—Yorkshire Evening Post—The Ethical World—Birmingham Daily Mail—Birmingham Daily Gazette.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Special.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.

Shilling Week.

THE first week in October will be a "Shilling Week" in aid of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. During that period I expect to receive one shilling (or more) from hundreds—I would fain hope thousands—of Freethinkers in all parts of the country. All the envelopes will be opened with my own hands, and all letters accompanying the postal orders (or cheques) will be carefully read. A good many subscribers will doubtless, as on previous occasions, take the opportunity of saying whatever happens to be on their minds. I am really anxious to know what they are thinking, and to see what suggestions they have to make.

This time I hope there will be very few laggards. Let all act together. Let every one feel that his fellow Freethinkers are doing something, in common with himself, during that particular week. This alone should be a stimulus and an inspiration.

The poorest can send one shilling. Others can send several shillings. If all do their best, we shall raise an amount of which the party may be proud. Never mind how little you can send. Send it. Numbers tell. Drops enough will make an ocean.

Probably most of those who have promised certain contributions towards the Fund will forward their remittances during the same first week in October.

Now then for a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together—as they say at sea; and we shall get our craft into good, deep, navigable water.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

THERE was another fine meeting at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Does Death End Us?" The lecture was a long one, but was followed to the end with unflagging interest. A few questions were afterwards asked and answered. One gentleman in the audience, a visitor from Exeter, came up to shake hands with Mr. Foote at the close of the proceedings. "I am one of your converts," he said, "and I thought you would like to know that I am satisfied by experience of the soundness of the views you have been expressing. I lost my boy a little while ago," he continued, and his face winced and his voice trembled as he spoke, "but I found your Secular philosophy sustaining." He felt the blow, but he bore up under it, and translated love for the dead into service to the living. This is the only true philosophy of bereavement, and it was good to hear such testimony from one who has only been a Secularist for three or four years.

Mr. Foote delivers three lectures to-day (Sept. 30) in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow; in the morning at 11.30 on "The Christian Powers and China," in the afternoon at 2.30 on "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ," and in the evening at 6.30 on "Does Death End Us?" It is to be hoped that the local Freethinkers will do their best to prevent the excitement of the parliamentary elections from injuring these meetings. Mr. Foote was to have lectured on week-nights in surrounding towns, but those meetings have been abandoned. He will, therefore, return to London on Monday, and be on the spot to deal with "Shilling Week" correspondence.

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Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts had, we are informed, another capital audience at the Secular Hall, Camberwell. His lecture was received with repeated and enthusiastic applause, and at the conclusion he received quite an ovation. Mr. Watts wishes us to state that he was much pleased to see some of his American friends present, and to receive the gratifying message they brought from his co-workers on the other side of the Atlantic. During the evening Mr. B. Hyatt gave two excellent recitations with great elocutionary power.

This evening, Sunday, September 30, Mr. Watts lectures, for the first time this season, at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W., taking for his subject "A Secularist's Challenge to the Clergy." Probably an interesting discussion will follow the lecture.

The *South London Press* gave a brief report of Mr. Watts's lecture on "The Defeat of the Cross" at Camberwell, noting that he had "lost none of his old eloquence," that he held his audience firmly for more than an hour, and that his speech was "punctuated with frequent applause."

Mr. A. B. Moss had a fine audience in Victoria Park on Sunday, when he lectured on "Bradlaugh and Ingersoll." We hear that several old Bradlaughians were in the crowd.

The International Freethought Congress at Paris took place on September 16, and lasted during four days. Messrs. Heaford and Rogers, our two Vice-Presidents, attended as delegates from the N. S. S., and were most cordially received by every section present. The Congress was, in point of numbers and enthusiasm, a vast success, and the evidence it afforded of the widespread and militant character of the Freethought movement abroad was very striking. Representatives were present from Germany, Spain, Switzerland, and Belgium, and from numerous Freethought groups throughout the whole extent of France. Nothing impressed our delegates more than the earnestness and intelligence of the very capable men—some of whom are orators of the first water—who are engaged on the continent in lecturing, writing, and organising on behalf of Freethought. A detailed account of the Conference will appear in our next.

The West Ham Branch regrets the resignation of its secretary, Mr. Vetterlein, and has passed a hearty vote of thanks for the able manner in which he has discharged his duties. The new secretary is Mr. W. G. Giles, 17 Folkestone-road, West Ham.

A letter from Mr. Joseph Symes will be found on another page of this week's *Freethinker*. We received with it a private letter, in reply to the one we wrote to our old friend and colleague after the N. S. S. Conference. "I am still deaf," he says, "as the result of the murderous attack upon me last December. In all other respects I am as well as ever. For many months I found my platform memory unreliable—or I thought it so. Three Sundays ago I recommenced to speak without notes, and found no difficulty. I am within five months of sixty, but I am as able as ever to work, and never enjoyed better health. I am not conscious of any falling off, and no one has yet suggested anything of the kind, as far as I know. I certainly shall do my best to visit England next year, and shall regret it if unable to do so. I am not discontented or unhappy here, but should very much like to see you all again. But everything depends upon my being able to get a substitute." Mr. Symes suggests that one of our "young men" should go out on a trip to Melbourne. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done. However, we shall give our best attention to the matter very shortly. Meanwhile, it is pleasant to note that Mr. Symes is making steady progress again at the Secular Hall.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch is taking advantage of the presence of the Church Congress. Special *Freethinker* handbills, supplied by the Freethought Publishing Company, are being freely distributed; and the city is being placarded with *Freethinker* contents-sheets, bearing the names and addresses of local newsagents of whom the paper can be obtained. Copies of Mr. Cohen's tract on *What is the Use of the Clergy?* are also being widely circulated. A supply of Mr. Foote's *Bible Blunders* was also desired; but, unfortunately, it was out of print. We congratulate the Newcastle Branch on its enterprise, and Mr. Bartram particularly on the zeal with which he is working.

Freethinkers are earnestly appealed to not to forget the claims of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. This enterprise is vital to the movement, and must not be neglected for any other object. We should be sorry to believe that Freethinkers are less zealous than Christians in the support—the *material* support—of their own cause; but we are constrained to say that a good many of them, who can afford to do so, have not yet vouchsafed any assistance to this Company. We beg them to do so, if they *mean* to, without unnecessary delay. More working capital is needed to render the enterprise thoroughly effective, and we hope a considerable number of fresh Shares will be taken up between now and Christmas. The earlier, of course, the better. An Application Form will be found on the last page of this week's *Freethinker*.

Some misunderstanding seems to exist with regard to the trial scheme of concentration upon London that was published in our last issue. This scheme—which was set forth in very plain language—is not intended to be anything but supplemental to existing agencies. Its object is to develop the Freethought movement in a special way. It is certainly not meant to save Branches the trouble of providing for their own maintenance. Nor is it contemplated that Branches shall claim for nothing the services of lecturers engaged under this scheme. Such a cause would tend to the pauperisation of the present societies. We may add that the scheme does not come into operation until November.

As Others See Us.

Some orthodox souls are converted to Rationalism by philosophy and science, some by ethical appeal, some by the Higher Criticism (*i.e.*, skilful literary analysis of the Hebrew and Christian documents), and some by Mr. Foote's method of banter, anecdote, and scorn. Mr. Foote is an easy master of this method. Nobody can beat him in his particular style of satire and scathing bluntness. He handles the heavy cudgel with all the refined cleverness of the fencing master, and his strong, biting English is softened and polished by the facility and graces of the scholar. Sometimes, it may be, he uses the knuckle-duster when a scourge of small cords would suffice. But every active mind must be allowed to choose its own kinds of emphasis and enforcement. Mr. Foote has a way of his own, and, with the weapons of his selection, nobody can do more effective execution.

Mr. Foote's special knack of commingling learning with satire is illustrated by his introductory disquisition to the essay on Balaam's Ass:—

"Classical scholars and students of modern literature know how the ass has been treated by poets and romancers. The stolid animal has generally been made the subject of comedy. Drunken and impotent Silenus, in the Pagan mythology, joins in the processions of Bacchus on a sober ass, and the patient animal staggers beneath the heavy burden of a fat-paunched, tipsy god. Apuleius and Lucian transform the hero of their common story into an ass, and in that shape he encounters the most surprising experiences. Voltaire makes an ass play a wonderful part in his *Pucelle*. And in all these cases it is worth noticing how the profane wits remember the ass's relation to Priapian mysteries, from his fabled interruption of the garden-god's attempt on the nymph Lotis downward, and assign to him marvellous amatory adventures. Erasmus, in his *Praise of Folly*, does not forget the ass, with whom he compares the majority of men for stupidity, obstinacy, and lubricity; nor is the noble animal forgotten by Rabelais, who cracks many a joke and points many a witticism at his expense. Our own genial humorist, Charles Lamb, confesses, however, to a deep tenderness for Neddy, and dwells with delight on the protection which his thick hide affords against the cruel usage of man. Sterne, in his *Sentimental Journey*, has a chapter entitled 'The Dead Ass,' wherein the animal is lifted into the sphere of pathos; and, lastly, Coleridge has some very pious musings on an ass, wherein the animal is lifted into the sphere of religion."

We lay stress on this characteristic of Mr. Foote's writing, because it is only a superficial judgment which regards him as nothing but a mocker. His sarcasm is well backed by erudition, and, if he had elected to exercise his wit on less popular ground, he would have made a brilliant academic.

With ridicule and contempt Mr. Foote strides over the discredited legends of Creation, the Fall, Flood, Babel, Lot's wife, the Ark ("God in a Box"), Jonah, and a few New Testament myths, such as the Virgin Mother, Resurrection, etc. His attitude may be typified by the little story he interjects in his criticism of the Ten-Plagues legend:—"When a Sunday-school teacher was telling the scholars how God slew all the first-born in Egypt, a little boy asked: 'Please, sir, what did he do when they were twins?'" This is the sort of aside which one never expects in the grave treatises of the Higher Critics. But it hits the mark with a popular audience, and is often more useful in laying bare the historical weakness of Bible narrative than the arguments of the Germans.

—*F. J. Gould, in "Literary Guide."*

There is as yet no culture, no method of progress known to men, that is so rich and complete as that which is ministered by a truly great friendship.—*Phillips Brooks.*

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The Gift of Unreason.

In one of the most admired of his prose writings, James Russell Lowell inquires: "Have we feebly taken it for granted that the distinction of man is reason? Never was there a more fatal misconception. It is in the gift of unreason that we are unenviably distinguished from the brutes whose nobler privilege of instinct saves them from our blunders and our crimes." Surely when we look around we must realise how much of truth there is in this somewhat cynical observation. Everywhere we perceive the evil effects of that "gift of unreason" of which Lowell writes. Mankind seems bent on exhibiting its madness, and dispelling the illusion, cherished by itself, that the human race is distinguished by rational faculties which are exclusively its own.

If, indeed, we are so differentiated, how comes it that the exercise of reason through all the æons has eventuated in such meagre results? Considering the period man has existed on the earth, the inconsiderable progress he has made must overwhelm us with chagrin, if not with despair. The survey that a man may make of the world, and its advancement in the limits of his own lifetime, is full of bitterest disappointment. Things move so slowly towards the longed-for goal that its eventual achievement seems almost impossible. There is so much of the "throwing back" of which scientists speak that our efforts seem mostly of the Sisyphus order. If we ask, "Watchman, what of the night?" is not the answer full of gloom? "Stormy and dark" is the outlook. The morrow may be bright, but when will it come?

But a little time ago, and were we not anticipating a speedy and uninterrupted run of peace, prosperity, universal amity, and reform? How ruthlessly have all these hopes been shattered in the last two years? Once more have we been thrust down the hill which, with so much labor, but still with hope, we had painfully climbed. War conducted on deadly modern principles, and Eastern savagery and massacre conceivable only as occurring two or three centuries ago, have given the lie to our vain boastings and checked our optimistic ideas. Surely we are the recipients of the fatal gift of unreason as distinguished from the nobler privilege of instinct, which preserves the brutes from our blunders and our crimes?

In the world of thought, too, how sluggish is the onward movement. How little cause for congratulation presents itself. How often unreason steps in, retarding the progress of truth, obstructing the spread of rational ideas, and even undoing, as it were in a moment, the work which has been the intellectual effort of generations. Reformers—but for some innate, unquenchable spirit of perseverance for which they can hardly account themselves—might well give up their work and let established things still hold the sway. Why should they suffer a perpetual martyrdom of effort and self-sacrifice when the headway made is so inconsiderable, and the ground won appears to be so easily lost? The seductions of *laisses faire* seem irresistible. "It is, after all, so much better to be stupid and walk in the old laid-out, well-trimmed paths than to wander after the desires of your own heart and your own eyes over the blue hills. True, there are glorious vistas to explore, and streams of living silver to bathe in, and wild horses to catch by the mane; but you are in a chartless land, without stars and compass. Ah, it is perilous to throw over the old surveyors."* And pioneering of the heroic sort seems often fruitless as well as perilous. The world is so hard to change that the advocate of new and unpopular ideas may well pause at times to consider whether, after all, his most strenuous efforts are not in a large degree wasted. Unreason is mighty, and seems often likely to prevail.

The adherents of Freethought, but more especially its advocates, have had bitter experience of the difficulties of removing established error, rotten as it may be at its core. Can we honestly assure ourselves that we have, up to the present, made as much progress as we might have reasonably expected? Clearly not. Rationalism is a long way short of the prevalence that we might have fondly hoped it would by this time have gained. The battle must go on very much longer before it becomes us to talk even privately, to ourselves, of victory. The Christian faith, which is one of the most prominent embodiments of Unreason, is still with us. No doubt it is a "grey faith, stealing to its doom." But it manages, all the same, to put on a bold, not to say insolent, front. Could we imagine a greater insult to reason than this mass of incredible doctrines, ridiculous rites and ceremonies, impracticable teachings, false views of life, and baseless assertions as to destiny? It is a monument of irrationality, fortunately crumbling at its base. Can there be any spectacle more provocative of ridicule than its scores of conflicting sects, with their utterly irreconcilable creeds? Or a more arrogant usurpation of authority than that which is made by the Romish Church and the so-called Church of England? The former has never hesitated to contemn and cast aside Reason—has done so openly, unblushingly, systematically, with every possible means of casuistry, coercion, and suppression at her command. Is it not melancholy to think of the vast numbers of poor deluded people who have surrendered their reason at her blood-stained altar? A witty writer once remarked: "If your eye offends you, pluck it out; if your reason offends you, become a Roman Catholic."

The Established Church of England seems to have had her fair share of the gift of Unreason. For a long time she has consisted mainly of two factions, who have been squabbling and abusing each other like two street viragoes, over the most trumpery questions of ritual. The present General Election has afforded them an opportunity to carry their squabble into the political arena, and most amusing it is to watch the way in which the English Church Union on the one hand, and the Church Association on the other, are whipping up their respective supporters, and trying to arouse public feeling on questions about which the great mass of the population do not care the toss up of a brass farthing.

Amidst all this hubbub of unreason, the Freethinker may congratulate himself that he stands aloof from at least the divisional strife. Theology in the bulk he is impelled, by the nature of his principles and his desire for human progress, to assail as vigorously as he may; and if at times the work of demolition is retarded, and the outlook is not as encouraging as he might wish it to be, there is always the satisfaction for him which arises from a consciousness of duty honestly discharged.

Francis Neale.

* I. Zangwill, in *Dreamers of the Ghetto*.

Pseudo-Science.

"'God has many visitors to-day,' said I to a friend last Sunday, as I beheld the crowds thronging towards the churches. 'They are paying farewell visits,' replied my incredulous friend."—*Heine.*

One cannot help feeling that the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Ripon, with all his gifts for reconciling opposites, missed a chance by not specifically alluding in his recent interview to "Christian Science." The gospel, according to Mary Baker Glover Eddy, is not hid under a bushel. It has been spread abroad, and bids fair to rival the older evangel of Jesus Christ. The newest of new Bibles, *Christian Science: A Key to the Scriptures*, of which the American lady-savior is the author, appeared in 1866, and is now in its 155th edition. It was enthusiastically received by thousands of half-educated religious men and women, reverent of learning, quite unable to discriminate it from its fraudulent imitation. And Mrs. Eddy, quite as indiscriminating as any of them, was admirably equipped by a nodding acquaintance with theology, metaphysics, and a scientific vocabulary, and the gift of a tenacious memory, to give them the thing they long for. Words were Mrs. Eddy's sole stock-in-trade. Her pomp of court, her priesthood—words, mere words! Five hundred pages of them in her book. To a reader familiar with the sober use of metaphysical and scientific terms, her explanations and her definitions are delirious jargon. They are the bastard offspring of a riotous imagination playing, in the light of half-grasped ideas from Hegel, or Berkeley, Spinoza, or Spencer, upon

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resonant polysyllables. For example, here is a—definition :—

> "Matter, mythology, mortality; another name for mortal mind; illusion; intelligence, substance, and life in non-intelligence and mortality; life resulting in death, and death in life; sensation in the sensationless; mind originating in matter; the opposite of truth; the opposite of God; that of which immortal mind takes no cognisance; that which mortal mind sees, feels, tastes, and smells in belief."

The author of this farrago of nonsense has been appropriately hailed as a teacher "second only to" Christ. It was proper, therefore, that she should regard matter, mythology, and mortality as synonyms. Even the Lord Bishop of Ripon could put this lady savior right on such a point.

On another page of this "divine revelation" we read that

> "the metaphysics of Christian science prove the rule by inversion."

For example :—

> "There is no pain in Truth, and there is no truth in pain."

Mrs. Eddy regrets that ontology receives less attention than physiology, and relates the following improving anecdotes, worthy of Baron Munchausen or the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes :—

> "It is related that a father, anxious to try such an experiment, plunged his infant babe, only a few hours old, into water for several minutes, and repeated this operation daily, until the child could remain under water twenty minutes, moving and playing without harm, like a fish. Parents should remember this, and so learn how to develop their children properly on dry land."

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us"! What, in the name of common sense, does Mrs. Eddy suppose ontology to mean? It was fitting such a teacher should give to her disciples a form of prayer and a confession of faith which bears a marked resemblance to the Lord's Prayer. The new high priestess struts in borrowed plumes, and charges 300 dollars for a dozen lessons. We set out in a spirit of inquiry to make a serious examination of the claims made by Mrs. Eddy and other apostles of the new light, and to assay the evidences on which they are based.

But this nonsensical system makes us giddy; for, of all the strange, frantic, and incomprehensible books which have emanated from the imagination of religious maniacs, this book is one of the very worst. It is even worse than the ravings of Joanna Southcott. We have now got a "Bible" with a vengeance. *The Forty Coming Wonders* of the Prophet Baxter is shrinking modesty itself compared with this effusion of Mrs. Eddy. This American Bible fairly takes the breath away. No other less colloquial phrase can so well describe the effect of claims so far transcending sanity. History offers many parallels to this mad Christian "science." In the early ages of Christianity credulous fools believed that handkerchiefs and relics had the power of curing disease, and that fevers were amenable to a loud voice.

In the Middle Ages the Moravians and Waldenses made the cure of disease in answer to prayer an article of faith. George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, professed to cure by the same means. The Jumpers, the Shakers, the Jerkers, the Mormons, the Methodists, and, in our own day, the Peculiar People, allege such Divine interpositions. The Pietist movement in Germany and the Great Lying Catholic Church claim an abundance of prodigies. Of the many historical cases of alleged cures, one of the most picturesque is the grace believed by many generations to reside in royal hands laid upon the scrofulous. Evelyn graphically describes the operation as it might be witnessed in his own day :—

> "His Majestie sitting under his state in the Banquetting House, the Chirurgeons cause the sick to be brought or led up to the Throne, where, they kneeling, the King strokes their faces or cheeks with both his hands at once, at which instant a Chaplaine in his formalities sayd: 'He put his hands on them and healed them.' This is sayd to everyone in particular. When they have all been touched they come up againe in the same order; and the other Chaplaine kneeling, and having angel-gold strung on white ribbon on his arms, delivers them one by one to his Majestie, who puts them about the necks of the touched as they passe, whilst the first Chaplaine repeats: 'That is the true light who came into the world'....."

Any one of the royal flunkeys could have touched as efficaciously for the "evil," provided he wore the royal clothes and had a sufficiently impressive manner.

The latest and subtlest form assumed by this pseudo-science is the gospel according to Mrs. Eddy. "Christian Science" is a temporary incarnation of irrational thoughts which have been dragged from the dustbins of departed ignorance. The special form with which this Yankee messiah endured them has only a pathological interest. One reels back from the insane heights of Christian "Science" to the beautiful simplicity of a rational system like Secularism, suited to the requirements of our age, and freed from the absurd anachronisms of pre-scientific times. Mimnermus.

Our Bazaar at Leicester.

Scarcely a member of the Leicester Secular Society can be styled a militarist, but on Saturday last (September 22) we had many gay flags suspended across the beautiful hall which Mr. Larner Sugden built for us twenty years ago. Somebody had sent us some banners, adorned in the centres with portraits of Baden-Powell, Roberts, French, and White. There were such groans at the sight of these dignitaries that I had to make peace by covering them up with pictures of Robert Owen, Thomas Paine, G. J. Holyoake, and Mazzini. Our stalls blazed with more colors than the rainbow, and our varied commodities included clothing, Japanese ware, china, glass, pictures, mattresses, Indian clubs, fruit, Freethought books, and a "Vinegar Bible." The Bazaar was opened by a series of speeches *from* Mr. William Wilber (President), Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Wright, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, and Mr. Sydney Gimson. Music gave dulcet intervals to the stress of bargaining. Our side-shows had nothing of the vapid and nonsensical. One was devoted to a pretty company of dolls; a second to a fine model of a Midland engine; a third to a well-arranged collection of shells, crystals, etc. On the opening day we did business to the amount of over £50, and the sales proceeded with energy on Monday and Tuesday. The Leicester friends would like me to return thanks for the help afforded us by the columns of the *Freethinker*, and for the kind gifts forwarded to us by sympathisers in Newcastle, Bradford, Bristol, Birmingham, Oxford, Nottingham, Canterbury, Cheshire, Huntingdonshire, and London. These contributions have pleasantly illustrated the fellow-feeling among Rationalist thinkers and workers in various parts of the country. From one staunch Freethinker came two mats made with small pieces of cloth, and a letter-rack in which the shelves were composed of shells. Some extracts from the letter which accompanied these articles may amuse the general reader, as they amused us at the Bazaar opening ceremony :—

> "I am sending you, with heartfelt pleasure, three homespun articles which may be described as follows :—I will take the two fancy mats first. As regards design, they may be styled 'crazy' work. This applies to the centre only, consisting of about 4lbs. of cloth cuttings selected from material that will not fray out at the edges, ⅜ inches in width, by 2½ inches in length, knitted on to a foundation of string. I must tell you here that one of my little girls, aged 13, was the worker so far as the knitting went. The finishing fell to the lot (of course, as a labor of love) of your humble servant, who, since the year 1845, had had some slight experience with his needle. Pardon my roundabout way of telling you I am a tailor. So much for the rugs. The letter-rack was made by my third son, George William Foote T., born August 15, 1883, the year that Mr. Foote, as he himself facetiously puts it, was 'enjoying Her Majesty's hospitality in Holloway Jail'.....It may interest you to know that the little girl who knitted the rugs has gained a first-class scholarship for three years in the Simon Langton Schools, founded some centuries ago by the individual whose name they bear. The competition is very keen, and examination rather severe. The Mayor complimented her upon her abilities when she appeared before him as a final ceremony before taking her place in the schools. Bravo, say you. Ditto, say I. The daughter of an avowed Atheist winning a scholarship

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founded by ecclesiastics! As G. W. F. often says, 'We do move!' Oh, shade of the saintly Simon, haunt us not!"

I am sure all the circle of the emancipated will join with me in wishing Miss T. success and happiness in her career. I was about to add more descriptive flourishes, but our friend, Mr. Chilperic Edwards, who is on a flying visit to Leicester, has called in as I write. So I hurry to catch the post, and then prepare for a chat with the accomplished author of *The Witness of Assyria*.

F. J. GOULD.

Judas.

"Judas was a common, selfish, muddle-headed, pilfering fellow. .....Helpless to understand Christ, he yet believed in Him much more than most of us do, had seen Him do miracles, thought He was quite strong enough to shift for Himself, and he, Judas, might as well make his own little bye-perquisites out of the affair."

COMING across this passage the other day in Ruskin's *Crown of Wild Olive*, I became sensible that it contained an idea that to me was a novel one. I put down the book, and seriously, and with a mind emptied of prejudice, began reflecting on the character of Judas Iscariot. I have not for some time given much attention to the work in which his acts are recorded, but at least I was conscious of a great discrepancy in the above account of him, and the idea left in my mind (and indolently retained) by the teaching of Christian parents, pastors, and masters.

Judas Iscariot! Why, the name reeked of infamy. All through the centuries of the Christian era has Judas been held up to execration as the basest of traitors and the most hardened of sinners, for whom there was no hope in this world or the next. With revived interest in the subject I looked up each Gospel in turn, to discover if reasons really existed that this man should be damned eternally. I was rather disappointed to find that, as in the case of other New Testament characters, the facts recorded with reference to Judas were really too meagre to justify any summing up of his personality.

Briefly the facts are these: He was one of the twelve Apostles. On one occasion he mildly demurred to what seemed to him a useless expenditure of costly material, and suggested that the value thereof could have been given to the poor. Any good and honest motive for this remark is repudiated, "because he was a thief"; no evidence, however, is brought forward to bolster up this gratuitous assertion. Then comes the so-called betrayal. He told the chief priests where Jesus could be found walking alone with his disciples, for which information they gave him thirty pieces of silver. Finally, on hearing Jesus was condemned to death, he flung back the money and went and hanged himself. This last act seems clearly enough to show that what has been stigmatised as a base crime was really only an error in judgment; but, before attempting to evoke a personality out of the above incidents in connection with Judas, I should like to interpolate a remark on the unnecessary outlay ascribed to the chief priests. Seeing that their victim was not given to lurking in caves or secret places, nor took any trouble to conceal his whereabouts, it was an elaborate and expensive way of effecting the capture. I am inclined to think the prophet Jeremiah was to blame for this. He was tiresome enough to say something about thirty pieces of silver, and the thing had to be worked in somehow.

But, taking the narrative as it stands, I came to the conclusion that the true Christian—that is to say (the term requires explanation), a believer in the divinity of Christ—should be the last person in the world to brand Judas as the worst of sinners. He, at least, should admit the likelihood that Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, a spectator of the miracles wrought by one claiming to be the Son of God, was really very far from thinking that, in accepting the thirty pieces of silver, he was actually delivering this divinity into the hands of man. With a belief in the supernatural powers of his Master, he must have laughed in his sleeve at having fooled the chief priests, who, blind and unbelieving, thought they had bought a God for thirty pieces of silver.

Of course, it was not nice of Judas to want to make capital out of his Master's divinity. But, then, it must be remembered, he was a poor man, and a simple one; yes, he must have been very simple, and with a fair share of the cunning that goes with simplicity. It is even possible that he prided himself on this same cunning, and was glad that it had not occurred to any other of the Twelve to make a little money so easily, and without really harming anyone. The desperate doing of himself to death proved how unforeseen was the catastrophe he had helped to bring about. It was not in order to avoid any personal calamity. His life and liberty and fortunes could suffer in no way from the crucifixion of Jesus. There is no other inference than that it was the resolve of a mind overcome by bewildered grief. But who has there ever been to express a little tender human sympathy with the man in that dreadful moment of sudden disillusionment, when the paralysing spectacle of a captive and condemned Jesus obliterated the remembrance of the promised ultimate triumph over his enemies? Judas's senses received only a direct impression of what had happened, and he realised that, instead of a harmless financial speculation with a God with legions of angels at his command, he had betrayed a fellow-creature with whom he had been so closely associated. His was evidently not a superficial, emotional nature, that could, like Peter, find relief in a few salt tears. Heartbroken at the magnitude of his unconscious crime, he flung back the price of blood, and went and hanged himself.

All this, of course, from the Christian standpoint. The Agnostic would treat the whole subject in quite a different manner. The above remarks should, therefore, by rights, be inserted in a Christian periodical, when some true believer, who at the same time loves justice and mercy, might be moved to plead for a gentler judgment on the sins of Judas Iscariot. He, consistently believing in Biblical inspiration, could urge that, after all, the "betrayal" had to be—if not by Judas, then someone else—that it might come to pass which was written by the Prophets, inspired by the Ruler of the destinies of men.

The whole thing was a part of the scheme of Creation. The methods seem unjust, not to say cruel; but we poor mortals must not question the Divine intentions. It might, however, balance things a bit, and cause sweet love to bloom and blossom more sweetly on this sad earth, if we taught ourselves to pity rather than blame the foreordained criminals of destiny, who, in the dim dawn of Creation, had their parts assigned them by the great World's Stage Manager, whose ways, truly, are past finding out.

PRO-CHRISTIANUS.

Correspondence.

A VISIT TO ENGLAND.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I shall be glad if you will permit me to tender my heartiest thanks to yourself and my British friends for the very kind and gratifying course you took respecting myself at your last Conference. I can assure you that sympathy and goodwill such as I refer to is doubly valuable to one situated as I am—lonely as student, worker, and fighter to a degree you cannot realise.

If I can possibly get away without injury to my own work here, I am resolved to visit you next year. But I must find a substitute before I can think of leaving my own post of duty.

Wishing British Secularism the most unbounded success, and the greatest prosperity and happiness to its propagandists,

JOSEPH SYMES.

Melbourne, Victoria, August 21, 1900.

Questions for Christians.

What cardinal, what bishop, what priest raised his voice for the rights of men? What ecclesiastic, what nobleman took the side of the oppressed—of the peasant? Who denounced the frightful criminal code—the torture of suspected persons? What priest pleaded for the liberty of the citizen? What bishop pitied the victim of the rack? Is there the grave of a priest in France on which the lover of liberty would now drop a flower or a tear? Is there a tomb holding the ashes of a saint from which emerges one ray of light?—*Ingersoll.*

Deacon Goode—"They say your son has been very successful in the ministry." The Practical Man—"He has that." Deacon Goode—"Has he brought about a great many conversions?" The Practical Man—"I don't know anything about that. He has accepted three calls within eighteen months, and got a big raise each time."

Mrs. Wellington (Christian Scientist)—"Johnny, if you only knew how it pains me to have you disobey me." Johnny—"I thought you said there is no such thing as pain, ma. That's the reason I thought it wouldn't make any difference if I didn't do what you told me to."—*Boston Transcript.*

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Watts, "A Secularist's Challenge to the Clergy."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Religious Instruction and the Coming School Board Election."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, F. A. Davies.
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, C. Cohen.
CLAPHAM COMMON: 3.15, W. Heaford.
FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, E. White.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, F. Schaller.
HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, C. Cohen; 7.15, S. E. Easton.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, S. E. Easton.
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, E. Leggatt.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. Percy Ward—11 (Bull Ring), "National Education"; 3 (Gosta Green), "National Education." Mr. Ward will lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Open discussion, "The Transvaal War: Is it Justifiable?"

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture on "South Africa."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (1 Grainger-street): 3, Members' Monthly Meeting.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "The General Election."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—September 30, m., Mile End Waste; a., Brockwell Park; e., Camberwell Hall. October 7, Cardiff. 9, New Tredegar. 14, Pontypridd. 21, Birmingham. 28, Athenæum Hall. November 4, Glasgow. 11, Aberdeen.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—October 7, a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—September 30, Birmingham. October 1, Debate in Birmingham. December 9, Glasgow.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—September 30, m., Station-road.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

Vol. XX.—No. 40. Sunday, October 7, 1900. Price Twopence.

The New Parliament.

As we are going to press, on Wednesday morning, it does not seem likely that the new House of Commons will differ materially from the old one. There may be a shifting of half-a-dozen seats one way or the other. More than this is hardly to be expected, unless an unforeseeable change comes over the political temper of the unpolled constituencies.

The *Freethinker* does not concern itself with party politics. We shall not, therefore, express any opinion as to the general character and value of the new parliament. Moreover, it is pretty certain, while we have a free press and a free platform, that the government of this country will be carried on in fair harmony with the ideas and sentiments of the people. For this reason, if for no other, the moulding of public opinion is a far more important thing than the election of representatives. They really rule who influence the minds of the electors, and even of those who are not electors, including all the women in the kingdom. We would rather occupy the editorial chair of this journal than a seat in the House of Commons. We would rather be a force than a register—a cause than the most conspicuous effect.

Whatever is the relative strength of parties in the House of Commons, it is well that it should comprise some interesting personalities. This makes no difference on divisions; indeed, the time has passed when the most powerful and brilliant speech could turn a single vote; and this very fact lends a somewhat farcical air to the bustle and oratory of the House of Commons. Nevertheless, the dramatic interest of the proceedings—whether they lead to anything or to nothing—is a matter of some importance. A hard-working nation needs amusement, and as long as we read reports of what goes on in parliament we shall be pleased to have politicians there who are capable of sustaining its liveliness.

It is pleasant to note that Mr. Labouchere has retained his seat for Northampton. He is not exactly a statesman like the great Charles Bradlaugh. He is the Radical editor of a Society journal. He affords the public accurate information as to the prospective movements of royalty, and as to the way in which the "upper suckles"—as Jeames expresses it—manage to kill their time. All this is dear to the hearts of the people who dote on a monarch and love a lord; and it pays very well at the rate of sixpence a copy per week. We understand that it is worth some £7,000 a year. And when the editor of such a journal plays the part of an extreme Radical in politics, the contrast is piquant, and lends a certain charm to a composite (and impish) personality. We are also glad to see Mr. John Burns retaining his seat for Battersea by a small but sufficient majority. Such a sturdy and strenuous representative of the working classes is an excellent leaven in the assembly of "the gentlemen of England." His vigor and honesty are refreshing. Not that he is by any means perfect. He can seriously reply to the astute Mr. Chamberlain (of all men), and talks of "answering a fool according to his folly." But this is one of the little mistakes of an enthusiastic temperament, and may easily be forgotten. What we do *not* forget, and *cannot* forget, is that Mr. Burns, who is reputed to be still a Freethinker, does not recognise, with any practical force, that the real, pregnant, decisive battle is the battle between reason and faith, between the free human spirit and the cramping influence of superstition. The truth is that all mere parliamentary action is mechanical, and therefore dead, in comparison with the vital power of education and principles. Had the member for Battersea assisted, even discreetly, in clearing theology and priestcraft out of the public schools, instead of throwing in his lot with the bastard Progressives, who keep the Bible in the schools and as much theology as suits the Nonconformist Conscience, he would have done more lasting good than he ever can do by means of little Bills in the House of Commons. While the beliefs which produce mischief prevail, it is only of partial and passing utility to attempt to correct some of their worst consequences.

Mr. Winston Churchill is another interesting personality. If we are to have Conservatives in parliament at all, and of course we *must*, it is a gain to have some of them with the advantage of youth and accessibility to new ideas.

Freethinkers may, at least in one respect, look with alarm on another long continuation of Tory government. Further sops will probably be thrown to the Church and the denominational schools, a Catholic University will be set up in Ireland, and religion will be supported in every other possible way. And if Lord Halsbury continues to sit upon the woolsack, we shall see the Oaths Act flouted by judges, magistrates, and coroners, whenever it is safe for bigotry to override the legal rights of freethinking citizens.

It is not very likely that a Tory Government will lend the least assistance to the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. Nor, for that matter, is much to be expected from the orthodox Liberals. We regret to see a man like Mr. Augustine Birrell, who is a lawyer by profession, and who actually reviewed Mrs. Bonner's biography of Charles Bradlaugh, professing not to know that Secularists labor under any disabilities. His legal knowledge is very imperfect if it does not extend to the laws relating to blasphemy and heresy. We hope he will take the trouble to learn the truth, and do something to promote the great principle of religious equality. It is not enough to extend the area of privilege. What is wanted is one level of freedom for all forms of opinion.

One important point remains. What attitude will the new parliament take up in relation to China? Will it favor unlimited missionary enterprise and the consequent wrecking by the Christian Powers of the oldest civilisation of the world? Or will it show justice, and even pity, to nearly a third of the human race?

G. W. Foote.

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The Christ Story a Myth.

The story of Jesus Christ has long appeared to me to be a curious record of credulity, perverted imagination, and theological machination. From the very inception of the story, the most wild, absurd, and contradictory views have obtained as to the nature and character of its hero. It is said that many in the early centuries entertained doubts as to the existence of the Jesus of the New Testament. It was denied by some that he was a man; "and that not by the enemies of the Christian faith, but by the most intelligent, most learned, and most sincere of the Christian name, who ever left to the world proofs of their intelligence and learning in their writings, and of their sincerity in their sufferings." Others contended that he was not a God; and the belief that he was a phantom, having no corporeal existence, found ready adherents. It will thus be seen that, in the primitive days of the Christian faith, very different views were held as to the nature of Christ. From this fact it is legitimate to conclude that the Christ story is based upon the idealistic, not the realistic.

The same diversity of opinion exists at the present day as to the personality and character of the alleged founder of Christianity. Certain "advanced" believers, while not prepared to endorse all the New Testament says of him, yet consider that the story of his life, whether it was real or imaginary, furnishes the basis of an ideal that is ethically useful. How such a conclusion can be reasonably arrived at is more than I can understand. It is quite true that an ideal founded on fiction may sometimes have its advantages, but to possess these it must be consistent and capable of having a possibly useful and practicable influence upon human conduct. But this is just what the conceptions that have obtained of Christ have not been. The idealistic notions entertained of him, so far as I have heard them expounded, are visionary and incapable of being realised in daily life. They are purely subjective, without having any objective reality. Hence, the ideas still expressed of Christ are throughout contradictory. For instance, the Trinitarians believe him to be God, but the Unitarians regard him only as a man; while the Swedenborgians think him a "divine humanity." The General Baptists maintain that he died for all men, and the Particular Baptists assert that he died for only an elect number. Many of Christ's admirers look upon his character as being perfect; others admit that, being human, he must necessarily be imperfect. Christian Socialists claim him as a great social and political reformer; but their more religious opponents aver that he was a spiritual regenerator, and that he spoke the truth when he said: "My kingdom is not of this world."

Personally I am driven, after a careful and impartial examination of the subject, to regard the story of Christ as mythical. The word "myth" is from the Greek, and means a fable, a fiction, an invention. Writers upon the subject have defined the term as meaning "a false hypothesis," "a form of traditional error." In this sense Christians have applied the word to the beliefs of ancient nations. The stories referring to the many Christs who are said to have appeared before the advent of Jesus of Nazareth are invariably described by Christians as myths. Now I allege there is no solid reason why an exception should be made with any of the supposed saviors of the world, Jesus included. The same mythical character pertains to them all; and the more I read and reflect upon the incidents, teachings, and doctrines of Christianity, the more do they appear to me to resemble what we are told of heathen mythologies. Emerson says that the doctrines of Jesus suffered distortion in the first and second centuries, and that Christianity became a mythus, as the teachings of Egypt and Greece had become before. This may be so, but it does not alter the fact that the entire person and character of Christ himself bear the marks of the mythical. Spencer put it that the mythical grew out of ancestor worship, and that primitive man credited objective nature with those faculties he found himself possessed of for the purpose of accounting for the movements and characteristics manifested in phenomena.

There is no doubt but that the mind is capable, under certain conditions, of making things that are not appear as if they were. This doubtless will account, to a large extent, for much of the fabulous with which the New Testament abounds. The miracles which Christ is said to have performed could be wrought only when and where the people were in a particular mental condition. Before sceptical inquiries the miraculous could not take place. The virgin birth, curing diseases by faith, and restoring the dead to life are fictions belonging to ages of ignorance and credulity. No sane person believes that such events could happen at the present day. Of course, marvellous manifestations occur now, but they are generally acknowledged to be natural productions.

The following question has frequently been put to the present writer: "If there is any truth in the theory that the Christ story is a myth, how is it that the belief that he was a real person has been so long perpetuated?" The answers to this query are numerous. From my reading of history, and my personal experience of the claims of what is called Spiritualism, there is nothing more difficult than to destroy the effects of hallucination, and to eradicate errors from the human mind, which errors have been transmitted from age to age through channels of custom and emotional credulity. Take the case of witchcraft and the existence of a personal Devil. Both of these myths are taught as realities in the Bible. For ages the Church urged that the teachings in reference to each were true, and thousands of credulous persons have accepted the existence of witches and of the Devil as a verity. Their mythical character, however, has been discovered, and their fictitious nature exposed. And yet to-day both myths have their adherents. The story of William Tell, and of his shooting the apple on the head of his child, is another striking instance of how hard it is to disabuse the mind of delusions engendered during ignorant and superstitious ages. Although as early as in 1598 the story was pronounced a myth, and Tell, the hero, a non-historical person, we are told that the majority of the Swiss people believe the story to this day. Many proofs could be given to show that the continuity of a belief is no proof of its truth. The fact is that, so long as the notion prevails that all phenomena are the manifestations of some hidden supernatural power, adherence to any myth is possible. But as soon as a correct conception of nature and of her laws is firmly established in the human mind, any departure from a rigid uniformity of those laws will be deemed utterly incredible.

For centuries the Church in this country has been teaching the unthinkable doctrine that man and God were united in the person of Jesus; that he was the supernaturally-begotten Savior of the world; and that it is absolutely necessary to believe, without questioning, that such teaching is true, at the risk of being regarded as outcasts in this life, and being burned "for ever and ever" in "the life that is to come." As infants were taught this monstrous doctrine as soon as their receptive faculties were at all active, and as they were solemnly impressed in every stage of their development that it was a divine reality, to doubt which was criminal, it is not to me surprising that the multitude complacently accepted a ready-made faith. When once this error took possession of the human mind, and was supported by Acts of Parliament and national custom, its perpetuation was a matter of course. Fashion, self-interest, and intellectual indifference upon the part of the masses have tended to foster the delusion which priests and ignorance have caused to be associated with the name of Christ. Besides, even many intelligent persons do not concern themselves as to the accuracy of the records of ancient history, particularly when a knowledge of the truth of what is recorded would disturb their faith, which to them has been cemented by time and strengthened by priestly impositions. That this is true in the case of the majority of the professors of Christianity is evident to my mind from the fact that there exists no historical evidence that such a person as the Christ of the Gospels ever lived. This lack of evidence I will endeavor to prove in my article next week.

Charles Watts.

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China and the Missionaries.

"Even the worm will turn if you tread on it long enough" was the manner in which a schoolboy lately delivered himself of an old proverb, and passing events in China give point to the maxim. Patient as the average Chinaman may be, there are points beyond which even he will not go. The recent outbreak has been violent, not altogether unexpected, and let us add, in justice to the Chinese, not altogether unprovoked. The shameless manner in which the great Powers have stolen slice after slice of Chinese territory, the moral reasoning in virtue of which a man who is already robbed of part of his possessions is compelled to share his remaining goods among all other possible thieves, and last, but by no means least, the irritating presence of thousands of missionaries of an alien creed and nation, setting the laws at defiance, and trampling upon the native religions, have all contributed to bring about the present eruption—an eruption all the more ferocious because it occurs with an Asiatic people, and is fed by religious zeal, always the most cruel of motives.

The present outbreak has, however, made one thing tolerably clear, and that is the responsibility of the missionary agencies for a great deal of the existing trouble. One need not go farther than the societies themselves for proof of this. The Catholics are energetic in asserting that it is Protestant methods that are reprehensible, the latter returns the charge with interest upon the former. Under these circumstances one may feel justified in assuming that both are tolerably correct in their charges, that it is simply a case of "When rogues fall out," etc. It is quite certain that the Chinese do not want the Christian religion, and that they will not have it. In spite of the most lavish expenditure, and the offering of bribes in the shape of free education and medical attendance, in addition to less honorable methods, the number of native Christians, on the missionaries' own showing, remains miserably small. Thus the Church Missionary Society, spending upwards of £30,000 annually, does not increase its Church membership at the rate of one convert per year per missionary, and of those returned half are children. The Baptists, with a staff of 208 missionaries and an expenditure of over £9,000, converted in 1898 209 adults and children and lost 156, leaving a net gain of 137. The London Missionary Society, which spends nearly £37,000 per year in China, has 43 agents at Hong Kong who can boast of having 225 Church members after 57 years' work, and of having 41 *less* on their rolls than they had four years since. At Peking, after 39 years' work and a staff of 26 men and women, their membership was lowered from 521 in '96 to 241 in '99. And this, not on independent and antagonistic testimony, but on that of their own published returns.

Of course, under these circumstances, a people who will not have the glorious gospel of Christ must be inherently stupid, depraved, and undeserving of any sympathy. Occasionally, however, the worm turns; and, although the Chinese have usually remained silent under the attacks of missionary reports, a recent article in the *Daily Mail* on "All the Trouble in China" brought down a really clever reply from the secretary to the Chinese Minister in London. The *Mail* does not like "either the tone or the matter of the article," which is only natural; although, to do the proprietors of that paper justice, I believe that if there was a chance of running a paper with profit in China they would be quite ready to encourage the Boxers and lead an attack on Christianity. The "regret" is simply a matter of business, its existence determined by the larger number of subscribers.

Mr. Ivan Chen is evidently a philosophical Confucian, and his reply to the *Mail* writer's sneers at the Chinese superstitions reads like a *Freethinker* article. All the trouble comes, he explains, from their having in their midst in China a religion "almost identical with the Christian religion, and who are very jealous of others who are bringing in what they consider a competing faith." The opposition the Christian meets with is the result of a temper and feeling akin to his own. Only the other day a London magistrate hoped that attacks on religion would be prohibited by law, and practically invited people to assault those who spoke against the religious beliefs of others. We are not so far removed from the Chinese in this respect after all. But, of course, the Christian differentiates. You, he says to the Chinese, indulge in the foolish practice of a praying machine, a contrivance by which, after inserting a number of printed slips and turning a handle, you seek to get your desires. Mr. Ivan Chen's reply to this is too delicious to curtail. "Many years ago," he remarks, "it was discovered that if one wrote his prayer and placed it in a tea-cup, and gave it one turn, it was just as good as repeating the prayer orally. Ten turns were equal to ten prayers. This was also found to be true, no matter to what extent the apparatus was increased in size, or the number of prayers added to it; so at the present time they put 1,000,000 prayers written on thin paper in a large vessel mounted on a pivot. On giving the vessel one turn it registers 1,000,000 prayers, each of which is just as effective as any other prayer. If anyone doubts this, we challenge them to a competition. If your missionaries can show us any devices in Europe which are more efficacious in keeping off devils, or cheaper or more expedient in propitiating deities by prayers, than those that exist among our ignorant people to-day, then, and not till then, will it be time for you to send your missionaries, and the superstitions which you doubtless think are new, to China."

Here is a fair, straightforward challenge. Let a number of prominent European praying machines—*i.e.*, the clergy—be selected, and also a given number of Chinese instruments. Let a test case be taken, and let the Chinamen grind away at his wheel, and the Christian utilise his voice. Then we can give our verdict by results. For myself I submit that the praying wheel is a great improvement on our own method. It is cheaper, it saves time, and it doesn't disturb the repose of devout but weary worshippers.

Mr. Ivan Chen declares that the Chinese have no objection whatever to European science, European medicine, or European engineers, so long as they do not threaten Chinese institutions; but that peace is impossible until the missionary has been eliminated from the Chinese problem. One portion, at least, of this assertion, that concerning medicine, is borne out by the missionary reports. The Church Missionary Society alone claims to have attended to 100,000 patients during the last year—which certainly does not look as though everything foreign were an abomination. Commercial relations, too, do not seem to be objected to. Sir George Goldie told a Reuter's correspondent, on his return from China in July last, that, apart from those interested in commerce, "the Chinese people—although, as a rule, most courteous to individuals—do not want us or our customs, or, above all, our religion. This last is the main grievance, and has been for a century. No doubt Europe has much to teach the Chinese in the art of war, in pure science..... But, apart from these subjects.....Europe cannot teach them much, while it has something to learn from them. Their code of ethics is as high as ours, and their system of local government (by parish councils) had, until the first intrusion of Europeans, a durability which Western nations must admire and envy."

No, it is the religion that the Chinaman raises the strongest objection to; and, judging from the admissions made by Christians as to the character of their converts, there does not seem much wonder at it. Here is a sample of one Chinese Christian community, taken from the last report of the C. M. S. (p. 380):—

> "Of the six or eight Christian shop-keepers in Fuh-Ang city, not one closes his shop on Sunday. Gambling by 'Christians' is at present also a great cause of sorrow to us; not only gambling, but gambling in which they invariably win, proving they are professional tricksters. I am afraid, after some further trial, that a large number of names will have to be struck off the rolls at some of the Fuh-Ning stations."*

And it is hard to detect any great difference between the Chinese belief in devils and the practice of Christian agents described on the preceding page, where Christian agents engage in the task of casting out devils from a girl, who, "at the name of Jesus, sneered in a horrible way, and we really felt the presence of the evil one."

But there is one real grievance against which the

* As at present there are only 92 Church members, 13 of whom are missionaries, the outlook is cheerful.

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Chinese rightly rebel. We have gone to China in conjunction with other Powers, ostensibly to put down a rebellion of the people against their Government. Yet, as a matter of fact, the missionaries themselves have been the principal agents in setting Chinese laws at defiance. We can take the case as stated by Protestants against Catholics, although I imagine it is the same, to some extent, with all. The C. M. S. report states (p. 360): "The anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiment finds some palliation and some excuse for its existence, alas, in the arbitrary acts of interference with native tribunals.....on the part of Roman Catholic missions in China." A man commits some offence—a swindle or a robbery—and is brought before the local tribunal. Instead of submitting to its decisions, he hastens to the mission, learns a short catechism, is baptized, poses as a persecuted Christian, and is protected by the missionary, and, if necessary, by the missionary's Consul. In this manner he evades persecution, and continues his depredations. A writer in the *Daily News* for August 30 asserts that "thousands of such cases have occurred in China during the last few years."

It is this immunity from the law enjoyed by many of the "converts" that exasperates the Chinese. Mr. Ivan Chen asks the pertinent question: "Suppose a Chinese priest should comé to England, and it should be known that every burglar, pickpocket, and thief, by becoming a Buddhist, would become exempt from arrest by the police. Suppose that the introduction of a new faith should give the criminal classes license to ply their trade in London with complete immunity from the action of the laws. Would the English people submit to such a state of affairs? And what is true of the English is true of all other nations. Why, then, should we Chinese be an exception to the rule?..... Before the missionaries visited our country there was less crime in proportion to population than even in Protestant Prussia, which is regarded as the most moral of European countries."

Clearly, there is here a real and a shameful grievance. And, in the face of cold facts, one has to admit the truthfulness of this writer's contention that "it will be quite impossible to have peace in China so long as foreign missionaries are allowed to interfere with the institutions of the country, and no Government at Pekin can be strong enough to protect unpopular missionaries throughout so vast an empire. We may not be able to keep these missionaries out of China, because we are not a fighting nation. Anything will be better than the missionaries." C. Cohen.

An Election Prayer.

There are three State officials who, by virtue of their office, feel called upon at national crises to inflict their more or less crude compositions on a long-suffering people. One of them is the Poet Laureate, who, in the person of Mr. Austin, has recently issued a poem on the end of the war. It is a poor effort, lacking in everything but a desire to provide something in justification of his ill-filled office. There are dozens—perhaps scores—of native poets who could have turned out infinitely superior verse. He has, of course, to maintain his position, of which he seems to be painfully conscious; and he has his emoluments, in some sort of fashion, to earn. The latter, we believe, include a yearly present of a butt of Malmsey wine. Far be it from us to suggest intemperance, but is it not possible that a few fairly deep draughts of that generous, old-fashioned liquid, if it is still to be procured, might have inspired the Laureate to a more spirited and sparkling composition?

The two other State officials we have in mind are Cantuar and Ebor—otherwise our most noble, right reverend, and gracious Fathers-in-God, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. They, for the paltry remuneration of £15,000 and £10,000 a year respectively, have kindly undertaken the charge of the Church in its two provinces and all their ramifications. Their manifestoes are easier made than the Laureate's, because they are confined to plain—very plain—prose, and fortunately few folks take the trouble to scan them critically. But, whether easy or not, something must be turned out by these two servants of the State at important junctures in our national history. Their voices in solemn warning, counsel, appeal, or chastened jubilation, must be heard. Otherwise, how is the world to go on?

So we find that the Archbishops, about a fortnight ago, duly issued a special prayer *apropos* of the General Election. They recommended it for use, and no doubt it has been, and is being, used, though to what extent it is difficult to say. It would hardly be safe to judge of the extent by results, for, as we know, the best of prayers may "gang agley." Still, it is something to have a prayer drawn up for us by two such experts. For, if the Archbishops do not know how to approach the Throne of Grace, who does? They are seasoned courtiers, conversant with all needful ceremony. They have the ear of the Most High. Their exalted spiritual office must carry weight and influence in heaven as on earth. The Lord could hardly refuse to listen to them, or to those who address him in their words.

How nice, therefore, to have supplied, ready at hand, a prayer containing the wishes of two Archbishops, carefully phrased so as to arrest the attention of the Almighty, and designed to lead him seductively on to a gracious compliance. Here is the Archiepiscopal supplication:—

> "Most gracious God, we humbly beseech Thee as for this Kingdom in general, so especially at this time for all electors of Members of Parliament, that, bearing in mind that their votes are a trust from Thee, they may faithfully and wisely make choice of fit persons to serve in the great Council of the nation, to the advancement of Thy glory, the good of Thy Church, the safety, honor, and welfare of our Sovereign and her dominions; that all things may be so ordered and settled that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations. These and all other necessaries, for them, for us, and Thy whole Church, we humbly beg in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, our most blessed Lord and Savior. Amen."

It is assumed in this prayer that the Lord is cognisant of the fact that a General Election is taking place. That is a graceful recognition of his Omniscience, which, in respect to other matters, is apparently not invariably accorded by all who address him. Dr. Parker, for instance, never takes that kind of thing for granted. He makes his groundwork sure by retailing to the Lord a comprehensive account of events, and a terse description of the exact situation. That makes the prayer complete, it is true, though it rather implies that the Lord is not as well informed as the readers of the ha'penny papers. Their Graces of Canterbury and York are more courteous, and are therefore, probably, much more affably received. There is nothing lost by giving the Almighty credit for knowing what is going on.

The prayer of the Archbishops beseeches our "Most Gracious God" to bestow his attention on all *electors* of members of Parliament. That request is, apparently, thought sufficient for the time being. It will, however, be extremely incomplete if, on the assembling of the New Parliament, our "Most Gracious God" is not still more warmly petitioned to keep his eye on the members elected. They, perhaps more than the electors, are likely to go astray, forgetting their present "pie-crust" promises, and exhibiting an unfaithfulness for which there will be no immediate remedy.

But what is meant by the words "bearing in mind that their [the electors'] votes are a trust from Thee"? Is it a heavenly franchise, then, that we are exercising? And on the old register, too? This point needs a little consideration. If the franchise is, indeed, a trust from God, why did he withhold it so long from the masses, who were as well able to exercise it years ago as now? Why were the small householders and the agricultural laborers kept so long from the possession of this political right—this divine trust? And how much longer would they not have remained disfranchised but for the exertions of men mostly of their own order? Who were the bitterest opponents of the bestowal of this divine trust? Why, the clergy of course, led by the bishops—the "spiritual pastors and masters" at whose head are now His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury and His Grace the Archbishop of York. What effrontery for these clerics, who withheld the right till the last

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possible moment, to now speak of it with sanctimonious cant as a "trust from Thee." There would have been no such trust from *them* had not their unwilling hands been forced.

The next point in the petition is that the Archbishops seem to want to turn the Lord into an Almighty canvasser. He is to do his best to assist these electors to "make choice of fit persons." That is rather a large order even for the Lord. We don't know—not even Cantaur or Ebor knows—whether the Lord is a Conservative, Liberal Unionist, or Radical, or a Liberal Imperialist. The "fit person" is, of course, the man who votes with his party; nondescripts don't count. Of which party is the Lord? How can he interfere without throwing his weight and influence into the scales of one section or the other? The important question is, Ought he to be asked to interfere at all? Is it fair to him? Surely it would be more decent to treat the Lord of all as we do our peers, and ask him to kindly stand aside and remain neutral. He has defeated Kruger for us. Let us give him a rest.

No doubt, by the time this journal reaches the hands of many of its readers, a sufficient number of contests will have been decided to enable some opinion to be formed as to the ultimate result. Then we shall know the sort of persons and the political party favored by the Lord, if this precious prayer is of any avail. The constituencies who have got their trouble over may still pray for those who remain in the throes. They may pray to the Lord to return candidates who will "serve in the great council of the nation to the advancement of thy glory." That clause is obviously a little bit of Archiepiscopal blarney. What more can we do for "Thy glory"? We have our Bench of Bishops in the Lords. We provide them with beautiful palaces and handsome emoluments, though masses of our population are confined to one-roomed tenements, and are often hard up for a meal. We have hundreds of fat livings sprinkled about the land wherein God's ministers live well and do little beyond praising, as well they might, his holy and blessed name. We put up with a lot of clerical arrogance and ignorance, and allow clerical interference to an extent which another generation or two will indignantly resent. What more can any god want? Possibly he is himself perfectly satisfied with all that is done for him. Possibly it is only his servants—led by Cantuar and Ebor—who are clamoring for more.

This prayer is full of egotism and self-seeking. It is a Churchman's prayer mainly for his Church. It implies that the governor of the whole universe is interested in what must be, to him, mere petty political strife on an insignificant planet. It implies that not only is he interested in this Lilliputian conflict, but at the call, primarily, of two pigmies in lawn sleeves he must needs actively interfere, only, however, on the distinct understanding that his interference is mainly in the interests of an inconsiderable collection of other pigmies who have chosen to set up an establishment called a Church, and have made use of his name. Need we pray, "O Lord, gie us a gude conceit o' oursels"?

Francis Neale.

If there is such a thing as the "pride of science," it is obviously exceeded by the pride of theology. I fail to perceive humility in the belief that the human mind is able to comprehend that which is behind appearance, and I do not see how piety is especially exemplified in the assertion that the universe contains no mode of existence higher in nature than that which is present to us in consciousness. On the contrary, I think it is quite a defensible proposition that humility is better shown by a confession of incompetence to grasp in thought the cause of all things, and that the religious sentiment may find its highest sphere in the belief that Ultimate Power is no more representable in terms of human consciousness than human consciousness is representable in terms of a plant's functions.—*Herbert Spencer.*

The sciences are not sectarian. People do not persecute each other on account of disagreement in mathematics. Families are not divided about botany, and astronomy does not tend to make a man hate his father and mother. It is what people do not know that they persecute each other about. Science will bring, not a sword, but peace.—*Ingersoll.*

Acid Drops.

Count Leo Tolstoi, the famous Russian writer, if we may believe the newspaper reports, has at last been excommunicated by the Orthodox Greek Church. The document in which this is announced to the world is worth a little attention. Tolstoi is charged with not recognising the existence of the Trinity in Unity, with denying the deity of Jesus Christ, with blaspheming the holy mystery of the Incarnation, and with falsifying the sacred text of the Gospels. All this is bad enough, no doubt; but his greatest crime, evidently, is having "shown himself a declared enemy of the Church," which he regards as a "human institution." That is a great deal worse than any other form of heresy, because it cuts at the very root of the Church's authority and privileges—not to mention its profits. It makes a priest a mere convenience, that may be dispensed with by persons who are ready to do their own thinking. If the people were brought to regard their spiritual pastors in this light, it is clear that the clerical profession would soon go to the dogs. Accordingly, the Orthodox Greek Church puts Count Tolstoi out of its communion, and warns him that, in case of his death, it prohibits "the celebration of all divine services and of all expiatory masses." We dare say he will laugh at this harmless thunder, though it may be an affliction to his orthodox relatives. Indeed, there are words in the excommunication which show that the Church has an eye on this indirect compulsion; but Count Tolstoi is not at all likely to recant, unless he does it by proxy on his deathbed. A good many heretics have had recantations put into their mouths by their families after they had passed into a state of unconsciousness.

We thought the London *Star* was a true friend of free speech. During the war fever it denounced in hot language the breaking up of certain "peace" meetings, and we were with it in this denunciation, for it is a crime against civilisation to violate the liberty of the platform. But we are sorry to see that our gallant contemporary feels less indignation when Conservative meetings are broken up by Radicals. It made nothing but fun of the fact that Mr. Richard Garton, the Conservative candidate at Battersea, could not get a hearing in the Town Hall. Those who did want to hear him were overwhelmed by those who did not, and the *Star* seems to regard this as an excellent comedy. Mr. George Wyndham was to have spoken at that meeting, and he also had to give up the attempt in despair. This is more fun for the *Star*, which seeks to cover its neglect of principle by sneers at Mr. Wyndham's youth and incapacity. Mr. Wyndham, however, is not so *very* young; and in the matter of capacity he is not exactly to be sneered at by anyone on the staff of the *Star*. He is an excellent speaker, and a still better writer. His essay on Shakespeare's poems is quite admirable. But even if he were ever so young, and ever so incapable, he would nevertheless be entitled to a hearing. Certainly no one is bound to go to the hall where he is announced as a speaker, but those who do go are bound in decency to refrain from drowning his voice with shouts and interruptions. Let us hope that the *Star* has only suffered a temporary eclipse.

We are glad to see one protest besides our own against this rowdyism at Battersea. Dr. Dawson Burns, writing to a Liberal newspaper, says: "Allow me, as a supporter on temperance grounds of the candidature of Mr. John Burns for Battersea, to protest against the rowdyism of a section of his followers, who do him the greatest disservice by breaking up the meetings called by the opposite side. Such tactics are a disgrace to any party, and reduce the boasted freedom of public meeting to a farce."

Charles Bradlaugh was a much greater man than John Burns, and he suffered a great deal of persecution; but it never made him waver in his love of equal liberty for all. It is easy to imagine how scathing would have been his rebuke of his Radical followers at Northampton if they had taken to disturbing the meetings of their political opponents.

The late President of the Wesleyan Conference, the Rev. F. W. Macdonald, told a funny story at the recent Church Congress. He said that he went into a church once, and the vicar came up to him, noticing his clerical attire, and asked him to assist in the service. "I am a Wesleyan," replied Dr. Macdonald, "but I could read the lessons if you like; that would not compromise you." "Oh, thank you; but I fear it would hardly do," said the vicar, and slowly retired. Suddenly he returned with a bright smile on his face, and asked: "Will you take the collection?"

Miss Roche Quin, daughter of the late Sir Benjamin Hall, came before Mr. Fordham at North London Police-court with a complaint against a man of God. It seems that last autumn her mother and herself, being ill and almost

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destitute, made a public appeal for help. A Nonconformist minister voluntarily took up the case, and collected upwards of £30. He handed over £6 10s., and vanished with the remainder. Nothing has been heard of him for six months, and the police and other inquiries have failed to find him. Applicant was told that it was a case for a civil court.

The Church Congress seems this year to have been a very dull affair. The General Election practically killed it. The sectional meetings were sparsely attended. The papers read were dull, and lacking in originality. Very few newspapers thought it worth while to give more than the briefest record of the proceedings. Even the local (Newcastle-on-Tyne) press dismissed the Congress in a summary fashion, to which it has not been accustomed in former years. Newcastle is not boiling over with love and zeal for the State Church. The general public have been too much immersed in political conflicts to pay any attention to Church matters, or questions affecting religious faith.

The only incident of any interest was the appearance on the platform of little Johnny Kensit. He supplied a comic interlude, creating a great deal of fun, and contriving to do his cause much more harm than good. His bombastic announcement that he had been adopted as a Parliamentary candidate for Brighton elicited roars of laughter. The notion seemed so comical that he could not resist laughing himself. Thus, as the *Church Times* observes, he reminded one of Charles Lamb, who lustily assisted in hooting down his own play.

The discussion on Old Testament criticism was tame and restrained. Speakers seemed afraid to say all that they thought. Dr. Wace appears to have been the most outspoken. He said that, as a teacher of candidates for Holy Orders, he could not, if he held the views of some modern critics, advise any young man to say solemnly at his ordination that he unfeignedly believed all the Canonical books. Similarly, he said, plain men and women could not read their Bible with the certainty of believing a single word of it.

The *Church Times* observes: "The higher critics both here and on the Continent have done their worst. They have, to their own satisfaction, shown that the history of the Bible, as hitherto read and understood by all Christians and Jews, is untrustworthy, and, having done that, they are brought to a standstill." Well, suppose they are brought to a standstill, what more does the *Church Times* expect of them, or what more have they mapped out for themselves? Of course, when they have proved what they set out to prove, they naturally come to a standstill. There is nothing more to be done.

"We know," says this sapient print, "our New Testament better to-day than half a century ago; we shall possess a more accurate knowledge of our Old Testament. That, we take it, was the impression produced at the Congress, and we believe it is the right one." On this there is only one remark to be made, and that is, we hope, in the course of time—say another century or two—Bible-believers will arrive at some sort of a knowledge of what their book really is. In the meantime, their so-called "revelation" seems involved in a great deal of obscurity.

Feminine fashions have much to answer for. Fancy how grievously the poor Bishop of Liverpool must have suffered when he is impelled to make a solemn complaint. It is all about hair-pins. In the New Cut the young lady who fastens her hair up and her hat on with one of these modern stiletoes takes it out on occasion and jams it in her lover's or a policeman's eye. The superior young ladies who go to Confirmation are equally armed. And Dr. Chavasse, apparently from painful experience, has been forced to express a desire that girls coming for Confirmation "should refrain from the use of long pins in the hair, as the presence of such pins frequently results in the Bishop's fingers being lacerated during the 'laying on of hands.'" Poor dear man, how much he must have suffered! Has he confided his trouble to Mrs. Bishop Chavasse? If so, he has probably been told that he should not fumble so much in the young ladies' hair. The less there is of this "laying on of hands" the better.

Recently a corpulent clergyman, in a mining district, preached a sermon which was listened to by an attentive congregation. As the rev. gentleman left the church, and was walking towards the parsonage, he espied a group of miners in animated debate; and, as he drew near them, one of the miners left the little group, and made as though he would speak. Thinking, perhaps, that some of the theological opinions he had uttered had not been quite clear to his hearers, he stopped, and inquired if he could elucidate any point that required explanation. "Well, sir," said the miner, "we warn't discussin' the sermon. The fact is, we have a bet on about your weight, and they've asked me to come over to see if you'll help us to settle it."

"A million a year," says Mr. Arnold White, discussing foreign missions, "is now spent on doing vicariously what used to be done gratuitously by the Apostles, and is done very cheaply to-day by the Papists. Apostolic missions were supported by converts and friends on the spot. Modern missions are essentially vicarious. So great is the political power of the missionaries under these circumstances that in China, for example, it exceeds that of the traders, and missionaries are the aristocracy among the whites. Licence is given by our Foreign Office to Protestant preachers which is denied to the men who ship tea and import Manchester goods. Our Foreign Office has been constantly engaged in forcing the Chinese Government to repair the wrongs and redress the grievances of more or less tactless missionaries. Then, again, the position of an average missionary is far pleasanter than that of a curate or a dissenting minister in the East or South of London. I would much rather be an average foreign Protestant missionary than an East-end curate or pastor. The life of the former is not without sunshine and change, and is often one of power and romance, and sometimes advantages of a still more material nature."

Mr. Arnold White quotes very appositely the remark of the late Lord Elgin, that "the existence of profound divisions among ourselves is one of the first truths which we Christians reveal to the heathen."

The following official declaration by the Chinese Ambassador deserves to be placed on record: "It will be quite impossible to have peace in China so long as foreign missionaries are allowed to interfere with the institutions of the country, and no Government at Pekin can be strong enough to protect unpopular missionaries throughout so vast an empire. We may not be able to keep these missionaries out of China, because we are not a fighting nation. Anything will be better than the missionaries. Peace, prosperity, and healthy commerce will be impossible until the missionary shall have been eliminated from our local problem. Recall the missionaries, and all will go well."

So it has fined itself down to this: there is, at any rate, "a distinct want of *medical* missionaries in China." And surgical missionaries, too, we should think, to bind up one another's wounds. No doubt the heathen Chinee is agreeable to take medical treatment if he can get it for nothing—and hardware and ornaments and cloth and calico, etc., at the same price. All this is very useful and acceptable, and so, my little dears in the Sunday-schools, save up your ha'pennies and pennies in your mission-boxes, and give poor John Chinaman a lift. He won't have the Gospel as a gift, but quinine, magnesia, Beecham's, and perhaps a little nourishing port wine will suit him down to the ground.

The latest thing in the way of ultra-enterprise is a scheme for retailing "holy water" on a large scale. Of course, it is an American idea. A number of steam-pumps have been erected on the Jordan, and are now supplying churches all over Europe with genuine Jordan water. There is no fear that any of it will be used for drinking purposes—even when disinfected with Scotch whisky. It is far too muddy and too expensive to take the place of Apollinaris. There seems, however, to be a pretty good demand for it for outward application. Sprinkled over the Christian hide to the accompaniment of a little pious mummery, it is supposed to be efficacious in cleansing from sin. Of one thing we can be sure. However hard the pumps are kept at work, and however limited the actual supply, there will be no lack of "genuine Jordan water" as long as ever there is a demand for it.

Recently the Rev. E. Cornwall Jones said that he came across at Pwllheli a party of Welsh working men uproariously drunk, and singing a Welsh hymn. This, he remarked, was "something impossible in England." Now a Welshman takes him to task, asserting that such a spectacle, sad though it be, is not at all impossible in England. Perhaps not. Judging by the character of some popular hymns, people who sing them must surely be intoxicated—either spiritually or spirituously. Sober-minded people would turn from the doggrel in disgust.

A Cape mounted policeman relates that when a Boer prisoner expressed himself to a British soldier as confident that the Boers would win in the end, because the Lord was on their side, Tommy said: "Garn! You've got no show! Ain't we got fifty bloomin' Lords on our side?"

It seems odd that the Church Army should have suffered by the war. In two months its funds have decreased by £6,500. But that comes of being the wrong sort of army. Our nobly open-handed Christian nation will readily find millions to slay fellow-believers; but to "save" them, even according to its own precious nostrums—well, that is "up another street."

The gifted Sheldon now wants to be a Chief-of-Police. He has tried his hand at being a novelist and an editor; he has

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all along been an over-rated "crank." He wants to get appointed Chief-of-Police in Topeka, in order to put down the liquor traffic. He would, no doubt, like to combine with the appointment the office of magistrate on the Bench, and perhaps put in a little time as jailor. Topeka must be a long-suffering city to have tolerated him so long. It may strike the inhabitants that it is about time his amateur efforts were curtailed.

No doubt we live in the best of all possible worlds. India especially impresses us with that fact. After drought, flood. Northern India is deluged with water. Places as far apart as Delhi and Calcutta are suffering from too much rain. In the former thirty natives were killed by the collapse of houses, and in the latter twenty, while thousands have been made homeless. It was, of course, quite impossible for Omnipotence to order things differently.

The spirits of the dead have a mighty fine nose for the shekels. Through an American medium, they induced a Miss Vanderbilt to part with £16,000. Messages from the other world are expensive affairs. The departed are not to be roused up for nothing. Cheap ghosts ought now to have a chance. A little competition in regard to price might have a salutary effect on the market.

Some people never are satisfied. Here is the Rev. Dr. Bernard contributing to Dr. Hastings's Dictionary of the Bible an article on "Miracles" intended to reconcile us to all the prodigies and marvels of Holy Writ. Then there comes along a *Christian World* reviewer, who says that Dr. Bernard has treated the subject with his well-known learning and philosophical acumen. "But that he removes all the difficulties of this thorny theme is, alas! more than can be said. When, for instance, he says of the New Testament evidence that 'it is not like that for the miracles attributed to St. Anthony or to Ignatius Loyola, which are found only in the latter, and not in the earlier, biographies; it is as nearly as contemporary as we could expect,' he is, we cannot help thinking, a too sanguine apologist. We call to mind Bede's *Life of St. Cuthbert*, the earlier histories of Thomas Becket, and Bonaventura's *Life of St. Francis*, all crowded with miracle, and all as near in time to their subjects as the Gospels are to theirs." Dr. Bernard had better have another try.

The juvenile comprehension of Bible narratives is wonderful in the extreme. Thus we learn from an article in *Longman's* that a small-boy student, in an examination paper, thus embellished a familiar story: "When Moses's mother laid him in the ark among the bulrushes she did not forget to give the baby its bottle."

The clergy have discovered another grievance, says the *Topical Times*. This time they do not say that they are the worst-paid of all professional men; and they recognise that the present is an inopportune moment to ask for more doles. They—or several of them—have conceived the idea that the common people object to them in railway carriages. One would imagine that when the cloth enters a third (it travels second with the ladies usually) bad language would cease, and an atmosphere of sanctity pervade the compartment. However, this does not appear to be the case. On the other hand, the clergy declare that the British working man sometimes takes their presence as an affront, and "swears them out" of the carriage by the very strength of his language. Really the British working man should treat his servants (the Church is, of course, established and endowed) better.

A startling revelation was made the other day by Sir Edward Fry in his address to the Literary Association at Bristol. He said that "Satan knew well how to work the printing press, and he was the most successful member of the publishing community." This is said to have caused great consternation in Fleet-street. Everyone is suspecting his neighbor. Only Stead and Hugh Price Hughes (with his *Methodist Times*) seem to have escaped suspicion. As regards publishers, it is proposed to consult Marie Corelli, who is an authority on the tribe as well as on the sins and sorrows of Satan.

Perhaps the minister wished to retain his congregation for a specially long sermon. Anyhow, he had had the seats of his chapel at Cardiff newly varnished. First one member of the congregation stood up without apparent cause, then another, and still another, till all were on their feet, the loud, tearing noise all over the chapel as they rose indicating a serious danger to clothing, not to say a possible offence to decency.

Never was there such an instance of a man's foes being of his own household. The poor man—Rev. Mr. Stainforth, of Mount View-road, Highgate—applied to the magistrates for assistance. He wanted an injunction against his wife, his sons, and his daughters, and he had also a grievance against his brother. The Bench didn't know what to do with him. So much Christian love had evidently driven him insane. He is, however, going to exemplify the Christian teaching of turning the other cheek to the smiter by summoning his family for assault.

This seems too good to be true. American deacons, we are told, are now in this country seeking pastors for some prominent pastorless churches in the United States. Let us hope to God they will take back with them a ship-load—nay, a dozen ship-loads—ay, and come again for some more. We will try and squeeze out a few crocodiles' tears; but, oh, *do* let them carry off a few cargoes soon. It is blessed to give—more blessed in this case than to receive—and right manfully will we put up with the loss.

The Bishops have returned from the Church Congress to their palaces, and the lower clergy to their snug rectories and vicarages to continue the preaching of the blessed Gospel: "Sell all and give to the poor." They have carried with them, if the recollection is not too dreadful, the following story told at the Congress by one of themselves:—He had just come, he said, from a house in his parish of Yarrow. A young girl lay there, dead from consumption, and in the same room four adults and five children were obliged to sleep. Happy Christian England!

A mad actor told the Bow-street magistrate that he had just been to heaven. When he returns thither he will have a thousand beautiful women. In the meantime he has a strait waistcoat, though, as far as his expectations of heaven are concerned, he is not a whit more insane than pious folk whose notions of eternal felicity are based on pulpit guesses that are absolutely without attraction.

At a harvest festival at Kingston a tennis-racket, made of bread, was placed in the centre of the communion-table. Why doesn't some congregation go one better, and hang up a motor car in the chancel?

Someone has written to the *Christian World* giving a very good reason for the falling off in Sunday-schools. He says: "As long as the leaders of our Sunday-schools cling to the faith of our grandfathers, and teach our scholars that the world was made just six thousand years ago; that physical death was introduced into the world in consequence of Adam's sin; that every child is born into the world a sinner, a child of the Devil; that the Bible, from the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis to the last verse of the last chapter of the book of Revelation, is the actual word of God, specially revealed by Him, and true in every particular; that science and history and the Higher Criticism (of which, as a rule, they know nothing save the names) are, if they conflict with their views, inventions of the Devil—so long shall we have a leakage in our Sunday-schools."

"Sunday Literature for the Masses" is the title of an amusing sketch by Mr. Wentworth Smee in the *Sunday Sun*. He describes the evangelising performances in a railway carriage of a "man of God" clad in rusty black and a cavernous smile, with a shambling, toad-like gait and a voice which nearly lifted the roof off. The Evangelist distributee tracts to some little children, and at last handed to Mr. Smed a leaflet headed "Personal." It was very personal. "Please sign that," he said. This was what he wanted signed:—

"If I die to-night I will go to H——
Signed..... Date....."

"What does 'H' stand for?" the *Sunday Sun* reviewer asked. "For 'eaven or 'ell," the Evangelist replied. "But I want to go to ——." "'Eaven?" he asked hopefully. "Oh, my young friend, do you want to go to 'eaven?" "No, Wood Green."

When the compartment was rendered more wholesome by the departure of the man of God, Mr. Wentworth Smee says he gave the children sixpence for the pious literature that had been presented to them. He adds: "I am going to try it on a few reporters I have the honor of knowing. If anything can touch them, it will be those tracts—especially the blue ones." He wants to know why the devil should send "his black-coated emissaries to poison our innocent enjoyment—why children should be worried over their poor little souls—why, in short, these injudicious, black-coated, well-meaning, but mistaken, idiots can't give their tracts to each other and let people alone."

"Something wrong somewhere" was the comment of the Chairman of the Annual Convention of the Blyth Wesleyan Circuit. He has discovered the "strange and deplorable fact" that, though the population of the district had increased, Methodists were no more in numbers than they were twenty years ago. The newly-appointed minister to the Blyth

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Circuit agreed that there had been no proportionate advance. "To his mind, there was an appalling indifference of the people to religion, and an appalling indifference of the population in that neighborhood to the services in God's house." May it not be that the services have ceased to offer attraction, and that the Methodist doctrines are failing to command belief?

"I have never met a naval officer, a Minister to other countries, or a traveller of any intelligence, who believed in foreign missions," says Winifred Black in the *Denver Post*. "When I was a very little girl I went to Sunday-school. The brother-in-law of the superintendent was a missionary to the Hawaiian Islands. Every Sunday I put a round, perspiring nickel in the box for the Sandwich Islander. When I grew up I went to those blessed islands. The first day I went out to drive I saw a magnificent country seat; great rows of palms led up to a magnificent mansion. 'Missionary So-and-So lives there,' said my driver. And then I saw another country place, and another, and yet another—magnificent homes, the like of which none but multi-millionaires can inhabit, much less own, in this country. All of them belonged to missionaries. A prominent missionary gave a picnic and invited me to it. He had twenty servants on horseback to help attend to the comforts of the guests."

The melancholy wights who think that religion consists in looking askance at everything that is pleasant and agreeable came in for a little gentle satire in a recent address by the Rev. H. R. Haweis at Margate. The Puritans, he said, denounced bull-baiting, not because it hurt the bull, but because it pleased people. That was very much the view some people took of religion. They associated it with the long-faced type, and with the generally looking askance at all that was beautiful and exhilarating. They were "Goody, goody"—that was the best term he could apply to the average commonplace opinion of Christianity.

The following is a true story: Ch.—"I'm afraid it's going to rain and spoil the hops." Sec.—"It won't rain if you pray hard enough, will it?" Ch.—"Oh, it's too late for prayers to do any good; the wind has got around into the south."—*Torch of Reason*.

In spite of Scriptural teaching, women *will* come to the front. Recently the congregation at the parish church of Wellington were more than a little startled. During the singing of the hymn before the sermon a lady left her seat at the back of the church, walked up the centre aisle, and ascended the pulpit. She then opened her Bible, with the evident intention of preaching a sermon. At that moment, however, she was approached by the churchwarden, and quietly escorted back to her seat.

According to the *Boston Journal*, U.S., the sect with the curious name of "Holy Ghost and Us" is developing its quota of lunatics. Recently a Miss Bell, who had been at Shiloh, the institution in Durham conducted by Evangelist F. W. Sandford of the Holy Ghost and Us Society, disappeared. A few days later she was found wandering in the woods in Green, ten miles from Lewiston, in an insane condition.

Rev. W. Morris, chairman of the Rhondda Valley School Board, has been asking: Do the cultured classes incline towards Agnosticism? This, he said, was the great question for the Church to-day, and it must be faced sooner or later. After an experience of thirty years of education in its elementary, intermediate, and higher grades, he was forced to the conclusion that there was a tendency in the educated classes in Wales to become estranged from religion in work, in service, in worship, in faith; not a mere desire to cross over the border of Nonconformity to the easier realms of Conformity, but to turn back on religion in every form. The Rev. Morris is much disturbed lest the University in Wales should become the home of Rationalism and Materialism, or a nursery of Agnosticism.

Fancy if all this General Election turmoil should be for nothing! A "saint" at Islington is convinced that the Day of Judgment will arrive between now and the end of the year. He solemnly gave this as his reason to a canvasser for not recording his vote. He said it would be all to no purpose.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the ***Freethinker*** and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the ***Freethinker*** now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. **Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.**

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

SHILLING WEEK.

The first week in October will be a "Shilling Week" in aid of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. During that period I expect to receive one shilling (or more) from hundreds—I would fain hope thousands—of Freethinkers in all parts of the country. All the envelopes will be opened with my own hands, and all letters accompanying the postal orders (or cheques) will be carefully read. A good many subscribers will doubtless, as on previous occasions, take the opportunity of saying whatever happens to be on their minds. I am really anxious to know what they are thinking, and to see what suggestions they have to make.

This time I hope there will be very few laggards. Let all act together. Let every one feel that his fellow Freethinkers are doing something, in common with himself, during that particular week. This alone should be a stimulus and an inspiration.

The poorest can send one shilling. Others can send several shillings. If all do their best, we shall raise an amount of which the party may be proud. Never mind how little you can send. Send it. Numbers tell. Drops enough will make an ocean.

Probably most of those who have promised certain contributions towards the Fund will forward their remittances during the same first week in October.

Now then for a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together—as they say at sea; and we shall get our craft into good, deep, navigable water.

G. W. Foote.

Subscriptions received by Tuesday, October 2.

Collected by Mr. Foote at Glasgow, 14s.; Mr. Sprout, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. F., 4s.; W. J. B. Anderson, 5s.; E. Kirton, 1s.; Miss Pizer, 2s.; David Powell, 5s.; J. C. SS., 1s.; Emma Bradlaugh, 2s. 6d.; L. N. Thorne, 5s.; F. Jones, 1s.; Mrs. Jones, 1s.; Legate, 2s. 6d.; Tom Batchelor, 2s.; T. H. Body, 2s. 6d.; C. Shepherd, 3s.; Mrs. Dye, 2s.; A. W. Jones, 1s.; W. Stourton, 1s.; A. Lye, 5s.; C. Bandon, 2s.; W. Garthwaite, 2s. 6d.; A. J. H., 1s.; T. Wombwell, 2s. 6d.; C. Elger, 1s.; C. Goddard, 2s.; R. Brown, 2s.; A. Guest, 1s.; J. T. Ives, 1s.; C. Moore, 6d.; H. Silverstein, 2s.; T. Ollerenshaw, 2s.; A. C. Brown, 5s.; J. Ferguson, 5s.; J. G. Bartram, 3s.; Jas. Richardson, 5s.; T. H. Elstob, 2s. 6d.; J. Easton, 1s.; J. Peacock, 2s.; R. Mitchell, 2s. 6d.; P. Weston, 1s.; T. H. Duke, 1s.; W. McDonald, 2s.; F. J. H., 5s.; T. Davison, 1s.; T. Shipperbottom, 1s.; W. T. Allfrey, 2s. 6d.; E. Bowen, 1s.; J. G. Dobson, 2s.; E. W. Scott, 3s.; Missus and I, 6s.; W. Rowland, 2s.; M. B., 2s.; J. Hockin, 1s.

We are made for co-operation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another, then, is contrary to nature; and it is acting against one another to be vexed and to turn away.—*Marcus Aurelius*.

There is something pathetic in the simplicity with which a narrow student will judge the doctrines of a foreign religion by their antagonism or conformity to his own orthodoxy on points where utter difference of opinion exists among the most learned and enlightened scholars.—*Tylor*.

"Mother, don't the angels wear any clothes?" asked a little girl of her mother. "No, my daughter." "None at all, mother?" "None at all." There was a pause, and the little cherub asked, "Where do the angels put their pocket-handkerchiefs?"

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Special.

The FREETHINKER has been for several months, and is still, published at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed. Readers are warned against sending orders to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. Those premises have for some time been definitively closed, and Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, who cannot be answerable for anything sent to him.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 7, Secular Hall, Manchester; 11, "China and the Christian Powers"; 3, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ"; 6.30, "Does Death End Us?"

October 14, Athenæum Hall; 21, Birmingham; 28, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

Mr. Charles Watts's Engagements.—October 7, Athenæum Hall; 9 and 10, debate at Bolton; 14 (Sunday), Bolton; 21, Birmingham; 23, 24, 25, and 28 (Sunday), Glasgow and districts. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

Unit.—Your suggestions as to the *Freethinker* shall be borne in mind. With regard to Cromwell literature; you should read Carlyle's *Cromwell* first of all, then Forster's in "Statesmen of the Commonwealth," and then Guizot's. There are several interesting books on Cromwell written more recently. Among them may be mentioned one by Mr. Frederic Harrison, and another (now in the press) by Mr. John Morley.

Inquirer.—We do not stand sponsor for Tolstoi's statements and opinions, or for those in extracts from other authors that may appear in our columns. There is no new fact that we are acquainted with that proves anything respecting "mind" and "spirit" as independent entities.

W. G. B. Anderson.—Sorry to hear you are a helpless invalid. Thanks for your remembrance.

T. Fisher.—Glad to hear that Sir E. Vincent, at Exeter, promised to support any Bill for abolishing the Blasphemy Laws. Also that you retain such a pleasant recollection of the evening when you introduced yourself to Mr. Foote at the Athenæum Hall. He is always more than willing to exchange a few words with provincial friends, if they will only make themselves known, after a meeting. We note your suggestion that Freethinkers might insure their lives—say with the Post Office—and nominate the President of the N. S. S. as the receiver. Perhaps it would be better, in order to obviate *all* friction, to nominate the Chairman of the Secular Society, Limited, that being a legal incorporation. We quite agree with you that more attention should be given to the matter of Secular interments. This is a strong point with the French and Belgian Freethinkers.

F. Jones.—Thanks for your encouraging letter. Our compliments to your wife, who sends a shilling, though not a Freethinker.

Legate sends a subscription to Shilling Week, and hopes hundreds will do likewise. So do we. This correspondent is glad to see the *Freethinker* nicely folded, and hopes yet to see it cut and stitched.—"Our little life is rounded with a sleep" occurs at the end of Prospero's great speech in the last Act of the *Tempest*.

Tom Batchelor.—Contents-sheet shall be sent to your newsagent. Thanks for your promise to take or guarantee the six copies weekly. We note that you intend to send a subscription on the first of each month left in the nineteenth century. A good idea. We wish it were infectious.

D. Yule sends cheque for £10, his promised subscription to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

W. Garthwaite.—We note your wish for "a big success." Thanks for your share towards it. Miss Vance has sent you the *Bible Handbook*.

W. P. Ball.—Much obliged for cuttings.

A. H. Tabrum.—You continue to write nonsense on the subject. We cannot believe that you have read Darwin's *Life and Letters* at first hand. We advise you again to read Mr. Foote's little work entitled *Darwin on God*. You will there see, amongst other things, that Darwin (in a letter to Professor Dana) regretted having used the term "Creator" in the *Origin of Species*.

F. Goodwin.—Thanks, but the subject has recently been treated at some length by Mr. Cohen.

Alfred Corley.—Yours is an admirable letter—the letter of a thinker. We quite agree with you as to the value of such a book as you suggest on Atheism and Theism. The God theory and the soul theory are, as you say, at the bottom of all religious superstition. We have not forgotten the pamphlets you mention. We are sometimes in despair at the meagre time that is left us for solid and continuous writing. Now and then we feel like throwing everything else up and devoting a year or two to serious literary work. But the old calls repeat themselves, and ——!

T. Wombwell.—We note your intention to "send more." Thanks.

F. J. Gould.—See "Sugar Plums."

R. Brown.—Such pious talk is too common in such circles.

J. G. Dobson sends his promised 10s. to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

E. W. Scott writes: "I have the utmost confidence in your generalship," and more to the same effect.

W. Metcalfe.—Your letter is delightful. Reading such things is a fine stimulus.

T. Clarke.—Hope to use it in an early issue.

H. Silverstein.—Thanks for your letter. It is encouraging to know that our efforts are appreciated.

T. Ollerenshaw.—Mr. Foote is in good health. Thanks.

A. C. Brown says: "I should say that whatever funds may be forthcoming will be in excellent hands; in the hands of those who understand the whole question, and will doubtless make the best of what is at their disposal."

W. B. Thompson.—Letter received, and date noted. Will write in due course.

H. R. Clifton.—Overful of matter this week. May find it handy in our next. Thanks for your trouble.

J. Ferguson.—Depend upon it, we *shall* "fire away."

E. Kirton.—We take it that you mean £1 for the Fund list and 1s. for Shilling Week. Acknowledged accordingly. With yourself, we should like to see thousands responding to this appeal.

David Powell.—It *will* be successful, if all do their share, as you do.

Emma Bradlaugh.—Your "mite" is highly valued. Thanks for all your good wishes.

J. H. Gilliland.—We hope there will be a revival in Belfast by-and-bye.

J. G. Bartram.—Mr. Foote writes you by post about lecturing at Newcastle. Subscriptions acknowledged in the list elsewhere. What you say on the other matter is well worth attention.

W. McDonald.—Aberdeen is a long way north, and Mr. Foote's editorial and other engagements do not allow of his being long away from London, but he hopes to visit your city again at no distant date.

Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.—E. Kirton, £1; J. Withy, £2 2s.; C. J., £1; K. G., £1; W. Garthwaite, 10s. 6d.; Alfred Corley, 10s.; W. Metcalfe, 10s. 6d.; S. Munns, £1 1s.

T. Davison.—Mr. Foote hopes to have his book on Shakespeare ready for publication early in the new year, at the latest. Of course, a number of friends would cheerfully pay threepence for the *Freethinker*, but a larger number would not, and an increased price means greater difficulty in reaching the outer public.

E. Bowen.—Pleased to hear you are so glad that you came across the *Freethinker* twelve months ago.

Received.—Newcastle Chronicle—Newcastle Journal—Friedenker—Blue Grass Blade—South Wales Echo—Torch of Reason—The Liberator—Lucifer—Truthseeker (New York)—Thanet Times—Morpeth Herald—Secular Thought—Two Worlds—Crescent—Newcastle Daily Leader—Secular Thought—Ethical World—The Riddle of the Universe, by Ernst Haeckel, translated by Joseph McCabe (Watts & Co.)—Liberator.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

Lecture Notices must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Scale of Advertisements:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

No word is oftener on the lips than "friendship," and, indeed, no thought is more familiar to their aspirations. All men are dreaming of it. It is the secret of the universe.—*Thoreau*.

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's week-night lectures in the Glasgow district were abandoned in consequence of the elections, but his lectures in Glasgow itself were duly delivered on Sunday. Naturally the advertising suffered through the plethora of election bills on the city walls. Still, there were good meetings, particularly in the evening, when the hall was fairly crowded with a most attentive and appreciative audience, including a considerable number of "strangers." Some discussion took place both afternoon and evening. Altogether, the committee expressed themselves as "delighted" with the day's proceedings. We are glad to hear that the Glasgow Branch is doing very well in its new season, and that Mr. Baxter, the newsagent, reports a steady improvement in the sale of Freethought literature.

Mr. Foote delivers three lectures to-day (October 7) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester. His subjects are calculated to attract good audiences. We hope the local "saints" will try to counteract the lassitude that usually follows a parliamentary contest.

Despite the rain last Sunday evening, Mr. Charles Watts had a good audience at the Athenæum Hall. He lectured for over an hour to attentive hearers, who marked their appreciation by frequent and loud applause, which was repeated several times on Mr. Watts resuming his seat. He again occupies the same platform this evening (Sunday, October 7), taking for his subject "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?" No doubt the Spiritualists will gather in force to hear the subject dealt with from a Materialist and scientific point of view.

We call the attention of our Lancashire friends to a two nights' debate which will take place next Tuesday and Wednesday, October 8 and 9, in the Temperance Hall, Bolton, between Mr. Charles Watts and Mr. G. H. Billings, editor of *Psyche*, upon the question, "Is Spiritualism True?" The debate will commence each evening at eight o'clock.

The N. S. S. Conference agreed to the proposal of the Birmingham Branch that the Central Executive should find speakers for a Freethought Demonstration in the Town Hall of the Midlands capital on Sunday, October 21. Considering the importance of such a gathering, in such a hall, in such a city, the President determined to take the matter up and do it adequate justice. Accordingly, he arranged to go to Birmingham himself, accompanied by Messrs. C. Watts and C. Cohen. Mr. H. P. Ward, who resides there, will also be available; so that there will be a good, strong list of speakers on this occasion. In addition to the Demonstration in the evening, there will probably be a meeting in the afternoon, with Mr. Watts in the chair, and a special address to be delivered by Mr. Foote. The Birmingham friends are anxious to get one or two of the speakers, at any rate, to address meetings on the Saturday or Monday in favor of Mr. Ward's candidature on the "secular education" ticket for a seat on the Birmingham School Board.

At the last Board meeting of the Secular Society, Limited, a grant of £10 was voted in favor of the Birmingham N. S. S. Branch, which has been, and still is, doing a large amount of very useful work with rather inadequate means.

The N. S. S. Executive has decided to issue the *Secular Almanack* for 1901, and Mr. Foote has undertaken to edit it as before. While this publication is preparing, for issue in about a month, we beg to call the attention of Freethinkers in business to the fact that an advertisement in it is well worth a trial. The terms are fairly moderate, and the *Almanack* is not a thing which is hastily looked at and then cast aside. It is often kept for months, and sometimes altogether; consequently, the advertisements are sure to be seen. We may add that all the literary work on this publication is done gratuitously, and that all profits (if any) accrue to the N. S. S. exchequer. Advertisers, therefore, help the movement as well as their businesses by securing a space in it.

The *Liberator* (Melbourne), edited by Mr. Joseph Symes, reproduces articles by Francis Neale and C. Cohen from the *Freethinker*. *Secular Thought* (Toronto) continues the reproduction of our editor's articles on Shakespeare.

The late King Humbert of Italy was a good Catholic, although he persisted in treating the Pope as a citizen rather than as a sovereign. The new king, however, is said to have no religion at all. He is credited with being, "if not an actual Agnostic, at any rate a Freethinker." These are the terms used by "Ex-Attaché," the well-known press correspondent. If they correctly describe Emmanuel, he will be opposed to the Papacy from principle as well as from policy. —*Truthseeker* (New York.)

Mr. F. J. Gould informs us that the Leicester Bazaar was a distinct success. More than £100 was cleared, and the Secular Society's members, who all worked very hard, feel amply rewarded. Mr. Gould asks us to say that Mr. G. J. Holyoake's name was accidentally omitted from the list of speakers at the opening ceremony on September 22.

Mr. J. G. Bartram, secretary of the Newcastle Branch, reports that splendid work has been done in distributing Freethought literature at meetings of the recent Church Congress. The *Freethinker* handbills put into circulation, together with contents-sheets posted up on the walls, have stimulated the sale of the paper. A single newsagent, who had one quire (27 copies), speedily sold out, and could have disposed of a good many more. We thank the Newcastle friends for their efforts in this direction, and we wish their example could be followed in other towns.

Mr. Charles Watts's pamphlet on *Education: True and False* was published in 1894. It was "respectfully dedicated to the London School Board," and might well be circulated during the 1900 School Board elections. It is a useful publication, well written, and neatly printed. The price is twopence. Copies can be ordered from the Freethought Publishing Company.

The West London Branch means to continue open-air work in Hyde Park right through the winter. Mr. R. P. Edwards starts a course of lectures to-day (October 7) near the Marble Arch at 11.30 with an address on "The Science of Religion: Its Scope and Meaning." We hope the local Freethinkers—wind and weather permitting, as the sailors say—will do their utmost to make these meetings successful.

The National Secular Society.

Report of Special Meeting, held on Thursday, September 13 (the President in the chair). There were present: Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, B. Munton, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, E. W. Quay, V. Roger, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, E. E. Sims, T. Shore, T. Thurlow, T. Wilmot, C. Watts, G. Warren.

The President reported the proceedings of the recent Conference *re* Secular Education, the view of the meeting being that the N. S. S. members should be asked to support those Socialist candidates who were in favor of Secular Education. The hope that the N. S. S. would run a candidate of its own was strongly expressed.

Mr. Moss moved, and Mr. Heaford seconded: "That Mr. Cohen be asked to stand as a candidate for the London School Board." Mr. Cohen having consented, it was put to the vote, the result being 8 to 7. The President felt this voting was too close to justify proceeding, and suggested that the matter be dropped for this year. It was resolved to send speakers to assist the candidates already in the field.

The President then read the draft of his scheme concerning the Twentieth Century Fund, and it was unanimously accepted. A sub-committee, consisting of Messrs. Roger, Shore, Leat, and Wilmot, were elected to assist in carrying out the details, and the meeting adjourned.

Ordinary meeting held Thursday, September 27 (Mr. G. W. Foote in the chair). Present:—Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, J. Neate, E. W. Quay, V. Roger, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, T. Thurlow, T. Wilmot, C. Watts. Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Cash statement read and adopted.

It was resolved to issue a Secular Almanack for 1901. Mr. Foote was asked to again undertake the editorial responsibility, and kindly consented.

The secretary was instructed to arrange for the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant. Messrs. V. Roger and W. Heaford gave a report of their attendance at the Paris Congress, and a vote of thanks to both delegates was unanimously passed.

Mr. S. Hartmann moved, and Mr. Moss seconded: "That Mr. Cohen be asked to run as a Secular Education candidate." Mr. Gorniot moved, as an amendment: "That the matter be adjourned." This was seconded by Mr. Leat, and, being carried, was again put as the substantive resolution, and also carried.

E. M. Vance, *Secretary*.

We are all tattooed in our cradles with the beliefs of our tribe. The record may seem superficial, but it is indelible. You cannot educate a man wholly out of the superstitious fears which were early implanted in his imagination, no matter how utterly his reason may reject them.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

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What One Misses in the New Testament.

The New Testament is a bundle of tracts written as an expression of the beliefs and hopes of a poor community of religious enthusiasts. It is not, and was not meant to be, a literary masterpiece. On the whole, it answers its original purpose sufficiently well. Its legends are told with simplicity, and its convictions stated with earnestness. A careful study of its documents reveals the mind of the early Christians, their heroism, their dreams, and their faults. But, when foolish people maintain that the New Testament is divinely inspired and edited, there is a very distinct change in the music, and criticism is immediately challenged.

I shall not re-travel the worn line of controversy, and point out contradictions and absurdities; but I shall confine myself to exposing one special defect in the New Testament considered as a literary achievement. I mean its lack of liberal culture. Of course, I should not expect liberal culture in the uneducated persons who put together the first fragments of the Christian myth. But, when I am assured that the book has received the touch of a divine hand, I have a right to look into it for a breadth of view and a certain magnificence of phrase which should surpass the stateliest productions of the world's authorship. This breadth and this magnificence do not exist. And, in proof of my censure, I will allege certain directions in which the New Testament fails.

The New Testament is wanting in æsthetic elements —*i.e.*, in appreciation of the beautiful in nature and art. There is, indeed, a sense in which the entire gospel may be regarded as a poem. For instance, the story of the Christ-child born in the manger may be counted as a not ungraceful metaphor, by which it is suggested that genius may enter the world under very adverse circumstances. Taken in that signification, the gospel myths have some fertility of artistic ideas; and the great painters—especially those of Italy and Flanders—have made rich use of the material. Agnostic as I am, I sincerely admire the pictures in which Raphael and Rubens have made the Christian fables beautiful to the eye and responsive to human sympathies. But when the theologians insist that the gospels, and the other New Testament writings, must be accepted in their literal meanings, then the whole thing becomes prosy and feeble. Myth always remains charming until it is believed. Then its brilliancy fades.

The writers of the New Testament are so exclusively occupied with the problems of the soul that they have no time to look up to the sky, or around at the landscape. It may be replied that their object is necessarily limited, and that they wish to concentrate our attention wholly on the spiritual; and that when the spiritual world is restored to harmony the natural or material world will soon receive its due homage. But this shows a misunderstanding of the human constitution. The education of man must proceed along a double line—the subjective and the objective. Man must be made aware of his own faculties and powers; and he must, at the same time, be made aware of the character of his environment. He must evolve the beautiful that is within him; he must also learn to perceive the beauty that is without. The New Testament ignores the beauty that is without. If God created the heavens, surely it would not be beneath the dignity of an evangelist to linger awhile on the majesty of the stars that keep watch over night and slumber. If God created the vegetation, the Christian Bible might have revealed to us some of the secrets of the flowers, and some of the delights of the many-tinted forests. If God created the rocks, a word of praise might have been spared for the exquisiteness of crystals, the colors of marble and agate, and the chaste hues of the nautilus. Shall Ruskin enchant us with the sunset, and Paul be silent? And Cuyp may persuade us into loving the very cattle in the riverside meadows, but Mark and Matthew must be dumb on the subject of rural loveliness. It may be answered, perhaps, that the New Testament writers could never have adequately described the glories of the cosmos which God made, unless they had composed a vast library of works on scenery and natural history. But a vast library was not needed. A few skilful lines would have sufficed to set the tone and disclose the sealed splendors of nature. Shakespeare did not demand an excess of words to portray the storm amid which the tired sailor sleeps:—

> Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
> Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
> In cradle of the rude imperious surge,
> And in the visitation of the winds,
> Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
> Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
> With deafening clamor in the slippery clouds,
> That with the hurly death itself awakes?

And Milton, with a few short sentences, succeeded in making the moonlit earth a thing of grace for all English memories:—

> Now came still evening on, and twilight gray
> Had in her sober livery all things clad;
> Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
> They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
> Were slunk; all but the wakeful nightingale;
> She all night long her amorous descant sung.
> Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
> With living sapphires. Hesperus, that led
> The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,
> Rising in clouded majesty, at length
> Apparent queen unveiled her peerless light,
> And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

Brief as the gospels and epistles are, they contain many repetitions, and the literary space is not well economised. In place of a miracle narrated three times over, we could have better endured a hymn to the snowy peak of Hermon, or a lyric in honor of the maids of Galilee.

While nature is neglected, so also is the greatness of human art. Even the British nation (which is not singularly æsthetic in temperament) could see the value of the Elgin marbles, and more or less honestly transfer them to its Museum. Paul visited Athens when the frieze of the Parthenon was yet unspoiled by time and war. Yet he could not drop one niggard syllable to prove that he was moved by its genius. Were all the Christian Churches established in squalid mining villages or fishermen's hamlets? Did the early Saints never behold a Greek mausoleum, or handle an Athenian vase? Could the temples of Adelphi, Ephesus, and Rome leave their taste and imagination unaffected? Had the lute no magic, and the choir of Apollo no message? With Egypt on this side, Hellas on that, and Italy on the horizon, could the spirit of Christianity stand rigid, indifferent, and insusceptible? It could, and it did. The poor, gaunt Christians of the first two centuries had neither the capacity nor the training to see Aphrodite in the foam, or hear the voice of Echo among the old grey hills. They were ill-fed, ill-educated. They had fine moral qualities, no doubt; but they had little or no instinct for the artistic and the musical. Their imagination was weak, and its weakness deprived the New Testament of color, rhythm, and style.

F. J. Gould.

Seer and Singer.

> "For proud and fiery and swift and bold—
> Wine of life from heart of gold,
> The blood of his heathen manhood rolled
> Full-billowed through his veins."
>
> —James Thomson.

The personality of Lucretius, the great Roman poet, is at once the most extraordinary and the vaguest of any in the world of letters. He comes before us in his works as distinctly as any other writer; he is, as it were, always present, but the details of his life are so shadowy and so misunderstood. Yet, in some ways, this old-world Freethinker may come more home to our modern sympathies than many others of those of the far-off time in which he lived. Across the gulf of twenty centuries, across the far deeper abyss of an older civilisation and an alien language, we recognise in him a brave soldier in the army of Freedom.

According to Lucretius, the great curse of human nature is religion, which priests still use to fool and degrade mankind. No lingering doubt, timidity, or affected reverence for what his virile reason condemned as false, restrained him in his masterly denunciation of

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religion as unworthy alike of philosophers and men. He treated with scorn and earnest indignation the priestly cant that attempted to shield the contradictions, puerilities, and immoralities of religion, by denouncing those who submitted unauthenticated fables and theories to the test of reason. He fiercely denied the immortality of the "soul," on arguments founded on Materialism. He also denied the doctrines of a divine creation of the world, and of a superintending Providence. Couched under other forms, arrived at by other courses, the principles of this brave old Roman are the same, or almost the same, as those accepted by the Freethinkers of to-day. The attitude of Lucretius was Rationalistic. He came forward as the champion of reason. Indeed, at times we might almost fancy he was a prehistoric Voltaire, confuting the arguments of the priests, or an old-world Huxley deriding the pseudo-science of theologians interested in defending an organised hypocrisy. Lucretius mocked at the clerical idea of a future retribution with which the old priests of Paganism terrorised the multitude. The fairy-tales of the tortures of the damned, he said, were merely the projection into futurity of that blind cowardice, those craving passions, that baulked ambition, that restless dissatisfaction, those penal inflictions that cause the misery and the degradation of human life.

Now and again his cheek flushes with anger, as when he records, in lines of great beauty, the terrible guilt, prompted by religion, against the most sacred ties of human nature. No poet has presented us with a picture more finished and exquisite than that of the awful Sacrifice of Iphigenia. It stands before us as if it had been transferred to canvas. It is a story "too deep for tears." We see the hapless maiden, trembling by the altar, without power of speech, the murderous priest, the sorrowing father, the strong men powerless, and the bloody end. Lucretius concludes his account with passionate bitterness :—

> "Learn thou, then,
> To what damned deeds religion urges men."

This is the one idea that runs through his whole poem, *On the Nature of Things*. He is man's champion against priestcraft. He tilts like a knight-errant against every form of religious terror, one by one unhorsing them, and leaving them disarmed and prostrate. He charges first at the most important and formidable, and then, having cleared the ground about him, demolishes at his leisure the lighter and more scattered squadrons. His very method is but part of the modern method, or, rather, it is the modern method in its infancy. We may gain some notion of the general effect of his great poem, *On the Nature of Things*, if we conceive Tennyson to have devoted his talents to versifying Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*, or Swinburne to have subordinated his genius to the poetic presentment of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Everywhere Lucretius treats priestcraft with passionate invective. In his contests with the clerics, an atmosphere as congenial to the old Roman as the breath of battle, he proved himself the sublimest of his country's poets.

As a sign of his wonderful soundness and integrity as a thinker, it is not sufficient to say that he is like the moderns. Writing about half a century before the alleged birth of the mythical Christ, he anticipated many of the most special individual scientific ideas of this nineteenth century. With most remarkable foresight he perceived the truth of evolution, the indestructibility of matter, the struggle for existence, the survival of the fittest, the origin of language, the progress of society. To us these things are but recent tidings. Twenty long centuries ago they dawned on the prophetic mind of this great Roman poet, "brooding on things to come." The most marked characteristic of Lucretius was his passionate ardor for all knowledge. It was simply unbounded. His pathos and tenderness in contemplating the more awful phases of life have already been noticed. His was the tenderness of a strong and manly character, self-reliant, and feeling sympathy with the weak and helpless, even with the animal world, as well as humanity. He voices the dumb, helpless, grief of brutes, sorrowing for their young. His allusions to children are exquisitely touching and beautiful. His love of science, his austerity of character, the magnificence of his genius, rank him among the really great poets, who, like fixed stars, shine for ever in the firmament of time. It is with no common interest that we regard this most gifted genius as a Freethinker. When we think of the present condition of priest-ridden Ireland, Spain, and his beloved Italy, when we reflect on the struggle of reason and religion, written in blood and fire, during the centuries, we feel it but just to acknowledge that this old-world Secularist, twenty centuries ago, fought the battle for humanity. Lucretius helps us to understand the magnitude of the struggle between reason and unreason. In his days, each, as it were, armed with simpler weapons, fought together. Now, science, armed with weapons so much more formidable and deadly, marches to battle in the confident hope of final victory.

Mimnermus.

Catholics and New Testament Ethics.

One of the favorite propositions of the neo-Christian school is that the New Testament contains the Alpha and Omega of morality. Jesus may have been nothing more than a man, says this school, but he was an extraordinary man. Mr. Gilbert has satirised the *dilettantes*, whose fad was that

> Art stopped short
> In the cultivated Court
> Of the Empress Josephine.

It would require a Gilbert to satirise the people who think that ethics and philosophy stopped short some nineteen hundred years ago in a little town in Judæa.

But an interesting commentary on this polite superstition is furnished by a recent article in the *Catholic Times* on Marie Corelli's new novel, *The Master Christian*. The Catholic leader-writer works himself into a great fit of indignation over the book—an indignation that is apparently compatible with a healthy ignorance of ordinary current literature. It is no part of my present purpose to deal with Miss Corelli's book, but the *Catholic Times* writer asks with surprise :—

> "Who but Marie Corelli would have dreamt of reincarnating the Redeemer and making him live again as a waif and stray of a nineteenth-century town?"

Well, whether or not anyone else would have dreamt of this device, the fact is it is comparatively common in modern fiction. James Russell Lowell in his well-known poem, Olive Schreiner in *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, Robert Buchanan in *The Wandering Jew*, and, one may add, Mrs. Lynn Linton in *Joshua Davidson*, have all more or less adopted it, to mention a few. Whether the Catholic gentleman is aware of it or not, Jesus was always a favorite with the fictionists.

But, after reciting how he was "disgusted" and "deeply amused" at a book which is "extraordinarily clev[illegible]" and also "extraordinarily illogical," and after further suggesting that it should be placed on the Papal Index, the writer proceeds :—

> "Does Miss Marie Corelli seriously believe, or does she wish her readers seriously to believe, that the morality of the New Testament will survive the abolition of the Churches which are generally supposed to preach it? If so, we fear she is deceived. The questions now affecting men's minds are no longer concerned with differences between Churches. Every thoughtful man recognises that those differences never should have arisen, and that the sooner they are abolished the better for Christianity at large. But thoughtful men recognise something further. They recognise the sad fact that, in our times, the prevailing irreligion springs not so much from the differences dividing the Churches as from the difficulties underlying the revelation which those Churches profess to teach."

This is pretty frank, and, whatever thoughtful men may "recognise" about the "differences" which have arisen between the Churches, the more honest amongst them certainly know that the statement as to the cause of the current irreligion is indubitably true; and the phrase about the revelation which the Churches "profess" to teach is particularly good in a Catholic print.

Evidently the *Catholic Times* is under no delusion as to the possibility of permanently erecting a system of ethics on a book, or collection of books, which possess

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what influence they have by virtue of the organisation which puffs them. It goes on :—

> "Miss Marie Corelli would destroy all the creeds ; she would build the spiritual life on the New Testament alone. Can she be really aware of the folly of such a program? If she is not aware, let her ask the first intelligent man of her acquaintance, and she will learn how little the New Testament is likely to support a code of morals, once she has destroyed the authority which has elevated the book to the position of a moral code."

With all respect to the neo-Christian moralists—and many of them, no doubt, are men of sincere moral enthusiasm—we submit that the Catholic writer here hits the nail on the head. It is the "authority," the Church, which has "elevated" the New Testament to the position it occupies ; it was the Church which made the New Testament. And men would never have persuaded themselves that it embodied the most lofty moral teaching if they had not first been persuaded it was divine When it is conceded that the New Testament is merely a collection of human documents of doubtful historical authenticity, it merely takes its place amongst the other literature of the world, to be criticised and appraised at its human value. Nothing of good that it may contain is any the better for being found there, nothing of evil any the less pernicious. If we pick out bits here and there of the teaching of Jesus, and say that they evidence a relative perception of a side of moral truth, we merely do so because such moral propositions appear to be validated to us by our human observations ; just as our observations and study might similarly seem to validate bits or phases, say, of the teaching of Nietzsche. And equally in the one case as the other we might claim that certain phases and aspects of both teachings seem to us the negation of moral truth. Once the New Testament ceases to be regarded as a supernatural product, the whole question becomes one of human judgment. The *Catholic Times* thus sums the matter up :—

> "She [Miss Corelli] must remember that the Church has made the Bible, not the Bible the Church. Mr. Mallock thinks the Church will endure, no matter what fate overtakes the Bible. Miss Corelli fancies the Bible would last, even if fate swept away the Church. Both are wrong. The Bible and the Church will stand or fall together, and only people with an incorrect conception of what Catholic teaching really is dream anything else."

"The Bible and the Church will stand or fall together." So says Catholicism—and so say we. But we add the corollary : they will fall together ; nay, they are falling, as this very Catholic writer unconsciously demonstrates. He expressly refers, indeed, to the "irreligion" which is prevalent amongst thoughtful men. But in itself the article—and it is only one of hundreds—indicates the change. Can anyone conceive the Catholic Church of, say, two hundred, or even one hundred, years ago publicly discussing in its accredited organs whether or no the New Testament was capable of being detached from the Church? Can anyone imagine the Church of the Middle Ages stopping to argue with fashionable novelists that it could not be dispensed with? Argument was sterner in those times, and frequently came to closer quarters than newspaper lucubrations.

"We will stand or fall together," cries the dying Church through her press. You are falling, *messieurs*, falling by the dead-weight of your out-worn creeds, falling because your foundations are being eaten away by the processes of time. Frederick Ryan.

The Paris Freethought Congress.

The International Freethought Congress at Paris, which took place on the four days from the 16th to the 19th September this year, was in every respect an important and encouraging event in the history of our movement. The splendid hall of the Grand Orient de France—the world-wide order of French Freemasonry—in the Rue Cadet was placed at the disposal of the Congress, and the spacious rooms adjoining were utilised for the sittings of the six Committees appointed at the opening meeting to report on the various questions submitted to the deliberations of the Congress. All the meetings were full of animation and enthusiasm, and the interest of the large numbers of delegates never flagged throughout the eight sittings, notwithstanding that early morn (at 9 o'clock) saw their coming, and dewy eve (at 6 o'clock) saw their going to and from the scene of discussion.

Delegates were present from all parts of France and Belgium. England was represented by Mr. Roger, Vice-President N. S. S. and President of the Camberwell Branch, and by the present writer; Germany by a young and extremely able lady, Ida Altmann, of Wiesbaden ; Belgium was brilliantly represented by M. Fourémont, member of the Belgium Chambre de Deputés ; Spain sent the genial Señor Maglia ; and Switzerland a very hard-working toiler for Freethought, M. Fuepius, editor of a Freethought journal at Geneva entitled *Lumiere*, and President also of the Freethought Society at that city.

A gratifying feature at the Congress was the large number of women delegates, and the eloquence and good sense with which they approached the varied problems set before us for discussion.

In all, there were present more than 200 delegates of various nationalities, comprising representatives of various National Federations, like the N. S. S. and the French and German Federations, and numerous independent Freethought Societies in France and Belgium. More than twenty delegates, representing towns like Charleroi, Liége, Nasniv, and elsewhere, came from the latter country. Delegates were also present from some of the Masonic lodges of Nance, from various Socialist groups, and from the French societies connected with the women's rights question.

Six questions in all were presented to the Congress—viz., (1) Freethought in relation to religion ; (2) the bases of morality ; (3) complete education and the program of Freethought ; (4) the rights of women ; (5) Socialism and Freethought ; and (6) special propositions having particular relation to the different nationalities.

The first serious business of the Congress was the appointment of Commissions to examine and report on the above questions. Mr. Roger was elected to sit on the Commissions dealing with questions 3 and 5, and I sat with the Commissions dealing with questions 1, 5, and 6.

In anticipation of the Congress, a number of valuable statements, reports, and documents bearing on these varied questions had already been prepared by individuals, and by the Committees of various Freethought Societies ; and these materials, after being properly collated and arranged, were duly presented to the Commissions and considered at the sittings, and formed in several instances the basis of the Report. Each item of the program was separately considered, and a valuable body of materials and ideas was thus brought together in elucidation of the questions under discussion. Each Committee appointed its own reporter, who presented the conclusions of the Committee at the general meetings of the Congress.

M. Victor Charbonnel, who presented the Report upon Question 1, is a notable convert from the Catholic Church. The whilom priest has become journalist, and holy water gives place to unholy ink. Since his emancipation he has identified himself with Freethought and Socialism, and our principles have gained an active and eloquent representative in the man who once ministered at the altar of superstition. He is still young, and a brilliant future doubtless awaits this able and earnest man. A little while ago he was married, and the good wishes of the Freethought party, universally, will go out to him and the partner of his life. M. Charbonnel's Report was a masterpiece of powerful exposition. Combatting all religions, and scouting even the hypothesis of a God, the Report proclaimed the moral supremacy of Science and Truth. The delegates were recommended to study the signs of the moral and intellectual decay of the purely Christian elements in our social life, and to embody the results of their inquiries in the various Freethought journals. The scandals and crimes of the priestly order, insomuch as they evidence the decrepitude of the creeds, should be made a special feature in our Freethought work, so that all the world may witness the nakedness of our spiritual pastors, and be ashamed of its servitude to a system administered for God by such types of men. William Heaford.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

OUR LEGAL CANDIDATES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—On September 27 Mr. Augustine Birrell, Q.C., addressed a meeting in St. Luke's Schools, Manchester, in favor of his candidature for N. E. Manchester. At the close of his address he urgently invited written questions, socially or politically. Taking advantage, I wrote down and handed up the following question : "Are you in favor of Secularists receiving and holding bequests left to them by will, the same as Christians enjoy under the present law? Secularists are debarred from receiving and holding any bequests left by will." The reply from this legal luminary was as follows :—"He was surprised at the question, for he did not think that the law was to that effect. He was in favor of Secularists receiving and holding bequests. He was a lawyer himself, but he did not think the law was as stated in my question. And the audience marvelled at his greatness.

Lloyd Passant (N.S.S.).

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Watts, "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?"

South London Ethical Society Masonic Hall, Camberwell road: 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "Morality and Art."

Camberwell (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione, for members and friends.

Open-air Propaganda.

Finsbury Park: 3.30, A lecture.
Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 3.15, A. B. Moss.
Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, A lecture.
Battersea Park Gates: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.
Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, E. Leggatt.
West Ham Branch (Stratford Grove): 7.30, S. E. Easton.
Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
Hammersmith (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.

COUNTRY.

Belfast Ethical Society (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): J. H. Gilliland, "Mr. Balfour's *Foundations of Belief*."

Bradford Labour Church (Peckover-street): 3 and 6.30, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner.

Chatham Secular Society (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Councillor J. Godbold, "A Comprehensive Religion and its Social Responsibilities."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone-gate): October 7 (6.30), F. J. Gould, "William Blake: Poet and Artist."

Liverpool (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture—for subject see Saturday's *Football Echo*.

Manchester Secular Hall (Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote—11, "China and the Christian Powers"; 3, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ"; 6.30, "Does Death End Us?" Tea at 5.

Sheffield Secular Society (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): H. Percy Ward—11, "The Foolishness of Prayer"; 3, "Religion in Board Schools"; 7, "The Delusion of Spiritualism." Weather permitting, the first lecture will be given near the Monolith.

South Shields (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A reading.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—October 7, Cardiff. 9, New Tredegar. 14, Pontypridd. 21, Birmingham. 28, Athenæum Hall. November 4, Glasgow. 11, Aberdeen.

Arthur B. Moss, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—October 7, a., Victoria Park.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—December 9, Glasgow.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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The Use of Missionaries.

It is naturally denied by the more zealous Christians that the missionaries are at the bottom of the trouble in China. The secretary of the Chinese Legation in London says that they are; indeed, he declares that there will be no peace, and no prospect of peace, until the missionaries are recalled. But the friends of the missionaries say that this is all nonsense. The Protestants admit, however, that the Catholic missionaries are an obtrusive and intriguing lot, and that the Chinese have at least *some* reason for hating them and trying to clear them out of the Celestial Empire. On the other hand, the Catholics broadly hint that all would go well if the Protestant missionaries would go back to Europe and take with them their absurd and narrow dogmatism. For our part, we believe both sides; that is, we believe what the Protestants say of the Catholics, and what the Catholics say of the Protestants. Probably they know each other if they do not know themselves; and, as lookers-on often see most of the game, it is quite possible that we see through both parties in this interesting dispute.

The Chinese do not appear to draw a distinction in favor of either set of Christian soul-savers. They love them so that they dote upon their very absence. Nevertheless, it must be allowed that there was no particular opposition to the missionaries when they first visited China. The Jesuits were almost welcomed, and they seem to have taken care that their welcome was not worn out too rapidly. They taught the Chinese a good deal of useful knowledge, translated Euclid into their language, gave them lessons in astronomy, and put them up to many wrinkles in the mechanical arts. Christianity was insinuated as they went along. But the Dominicans appeared upon the scene and quarrelled with the Jesuits; and then the Protestants came and quarrelled with both—and with each other; and the Chinese began to wish them all to the devil. But unfortunately they stayed there and played the devil with the Chinese.

What is the object of these missionaries? In the first place, they are getting a living, and some of them a good one. It is a mistake to suppose that they are all burning with disinterested zeal. For the most part the missionary societies are well-organised agencies for diminishing the pressure of the unemployed in the clerical labor market at home. Millions of souls still need saving here, but there are too many gentlemen engaged already in the business, and it is found advisable to send off a number of them every year to save souls in heathen countries. Ostensibly, of course, their object is to save the souls of the said heathen. To save them from *what?* The only possible answer is that the heathen are going in streams to hell, and that it is an act of infinite charity to arrest their headlong flight to everlasting perdition. Well, if the missionaries really believe that, and are actuated by such a tender motive, they are worthy of our admiration from a moral point of view, whatever we may think of their intelligence. But they betray at least the mixture of their motives when they clamor for protection. They proclaim themselves as a species of traders. Missionaries should go on their own responsibilities, take their own risks, and accept martyrdom, if they meet it, as the crown of their enterprise. But when they claim to be protected as citizens of the countries they have left, and call for naval and military assistance in the extremities they have deliberately encountered, they range themselves with the other commercial classes who seek openings in foreign lands. Moreover, they exhibit an additional hypocrisy; for Jesus Christ told his apostles that they should be delighted when they were persecuted for his sake, and that a great reward was awaiting them in heaven. It is, therefore, a gross insincerity on their part to fly from persecution, often with indecent haste, and seek shelter under the Union Jack. They say that Christ is their captain, but when their persons are in danger they trust to Admiral This and General That.

Even if the missionaries were perfectly sincere and absolutely disinterested, we might still ask them whether their game is worth the candle. China contains more than four hundred millions of inhabitants. Some fifteen millions of these die every year. Now, it is doubtful if the missionaries succeed in converting one thousand per annum. Would it not be just as well to let such a few die in their national faith, and make themselves as comfortable as possible in the other world with their own countrymen? It seems to be overlooked that converted Chinamen are expected to live in the other world with Europeans, and that a great many Celestials do not regard the prospect as alluring.

We see that the Rev. Dr. Clifford, the famous, energetic Baptist, has been delivering a fiery speech on the subject of Missions to China. He more than admits the "greed" of the Catholic missionaries for "political power," but he denies that "our Protestant messengers have created troubles." Anyhow, he says, they mean to continue their work. Their object is to "carry to men redemption and renewal, and peace and joy, the new life that is in Christ," and "nothing will hold them back." This, however, is untrue. Something *does* hold them back. Protestant missionaries have been flying for safety to places guarded by British and other European troops. They are holding back until they feel they can preach Christ again with the prospect of regular meals and sound sleep.

Dr. Clifford affirms that "the undecaying strength of missions is the perpetual miracle of conversion." Miracle, indeed! Why, if conversion were a matter of miracle the whole world ought to have been converted long ago. Omnipotence should not be as slow as a missionary society. There are really no degrees in the miraculous; to God one act must be as simple as another, and the conversion of millions as easy as the conversion of units. The

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very paucity of converts is a proof of the absence of supernatural agency. Indeed, the phenomenon is rather surprising even on purely natural grounds. Considering the number of missionaries, their advantages of education, the money spent upon them, and the *prestige* they enjoy of belonging to the conquering races of Europe; considering also the curious worldly temptations so frequently offered to the lower classes of heathen; it is quite astonishing that so few are "brought to Christ." How many *real* converts there are it is hard to calculate, but the *nominal* converts can be counted, and the total is a satire on Christian pretensions.

G. W. Foote.

The Church Congress.

The Church Congress just concluded at Newcastle-on-Tyne can hardly be said to have been an inspiriting affair. It mapped out an extensive program, grew very fervent over the nature of the "Reformation Settlement," indignant over the want of support of Voluntary schools, tearful on behalf of the underpaid clergy, vaguely charitable as regards social problems, talked for nearly a week, and then dissolved, pleased with itself and everything in general. It was a glorious opportunity for self-adulation, and it was not allowed to slip by unutilised. Speaker after speaker claimed reform after reform as having been achieved by the Church, until one began to wonder if anything had ever been done apart from the Church by law established, and whether the names of Paine and Bentham and Mill and Owen and Darwin and Spencer, with scores of others, were not mere myths that we had mistaken for realities, much as the Catholic Church had, in its eagerness for martyrs, placed on its roll of saints people who had never existed.

At this game of quietly annexing all the reforms of the century as being due to the activity of the Christian Churches the Bishop of Ripon achieves an easy first. The abolition of slavery, the improved position of labor, the development of municipal activity—these, with numerous other improvements, were all dragged in under the general heading of "The Church's Progress during the Nineteenth Century." And all with the quiet assumption that the working-out of such movements was part of the ordinary work of the Church, and a work in which she was always engaged. Not a word of recognition for the labors of men who lived outside all the Churches, and who sowed in tears of blood and misery the reforms that a Christian prelate, with cool impertinence, now claims as his own. The Bishop must have known full well that, as a speaker at the Carlisle Church Congress in 1884 said, "During this century the influence of the Church of England, in so far as it had publicly manifested itself, had for the most part been nearly always on the wrong side—on the side of privilege against right, on the side of ignorance against knowledge, on the side of restriction against freedom, on the side of the few against the many." The Church fought its hardest against the progress of education, against the entrance of Jews and Catholics into Parliament, against the abolition of payment of wages in public-houses; against the abolition of slavery, for the expressed reason that it was a blow at the rights of property;* against the amelioration of the criminal code; against Parliamentary reform, when, as one of their own number records (Canon Molesworth), "they were almost unanimous in their hatred of the proposed innovation"; against the abolition of the Corn Laws, because, to quote Cobden, "having an interest in the high price of bread," they were almost to a man guilty of causing the distress. In brief, it is hard to find what they were not against. I might, however, recommend to the Bishop a statement made at his own Church Congress at its last Newcastle gathering. It was made by the Rev. T. J. Laurence, and was to the effect that "No one can read the history of the last two hundred years without coming mournfully and sadly to the conclusion that the clergy of the Established Church, as a body, have resisted most of the political and social reforms that have made the country a fit place to live in."

* Sir G. Stephen, *Anti-Slavery Recollections*, p. 179.

The Bishop, I see from the papers, spoke without notes, and this may account for the above-quoted statements, as well as for the one that "under the shadow of Christianity humane institutions have always flourished"—a declaration tolerably accurate if it is meant that *some* humane institutions have existed side by side with the Christian religion, but not so if it is meant that Christianity was responsible for their existence. As a matter of fact, some of the most diabolical institutions the world has seen have been created "under the shadow of Christianity," and have been protected by its influence. Persecution for difference of opinion—one of the vilest of offences, because of its far-reaching effects on the whole life of society—was practised far more energetically by Christians than by any other people the world has seen. Mohammedanism spared the heretic on payment of a tribute; the persecutions of pre-Christian religions were spasmodic, and usually of a mild character. It was reserved for the Christian religion to give the whole world a lesson in this art, to call in every device that human ingenuity could invent for lengthening the agony of its victims, and to allow no consideration of age, sex, or social standing to come between it and those who dared to differ from its teachings.

The African slave trade was, too, a thing of Christian origin, created primarily to work the mines of South America. It was Christian in origin, fostered by Christians, was unknown in North America until introduced by Christians, and far outrivalled in horror all that we read of concerning ancient slavery. The slave of antiquity was often a poet, a philosopher, a teacher. The slave of modern American Christians, the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, was prohibited by law from learning the rudiments of his owner's language. The slave system of antiquity might urge on its defence that it was an improvement on what had gone before. The slave system of modern times was deliberately fostered for the satisfaction of the most sordid of motives.

Infanticide is a crime of which modern Christians are never tired of charging pre-Christian nations. But less than a hundred years ago there was going on in this country, "under the shadow of Christianity," a species of child murder such as no other nation has ever been guilty of. It was under the shadow of English Christianity that, during the early factory system, children of seven and eight years of age were deliberately murdered for the benefit of their employers. It was in Christian England that, as late as 1816, an Act had to be passed prohibiting children under *nine years of age* from working in cotton mills, and fixing the hours of work at not more than *twelve hours* daily. Think of the infamous condition of things that required legislation of this character, and contrast it with the statement, "Under the shadow of Christianity humane institutions have always flourished." The Bishop of Ripon must be either a great satirist or ——.

The Bishop found further proof of the Church's progress in the fact that Christian nations now govern 800,000,000 people and control four times as much of the earth's area as is governed by non-Christian nations. This, I suppose, is an illustration of the text, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"; and still more evidence from the fact that "organisations which were started for a definitely spiritual object have been drawn into social channels." Really, the speaker *must* have been trying to infuse humor into the meeting. That social forces capture organisations that were started for a "definitely spiritual object" we should have thought to have been a sign of the Church's loss, not its gain. It is true that all religious organisations are compelled nowadays to take some interest in social matters; but this is precisely because the secularisation of life has gone on so rapidly and so thoroughly that even the Churches find themselves powerless to resist its influences. Probably, however, the Bishop was only poking fun.

Turning to other speakers and subjects, Professor Ryle, in the course of a paper on "Old Testament Criticism," pointed out that criticism had compelled them to abandon a great deal of the orthodox position concerning the Bible. They could "claim no supernatural anticipation of knowledge. They were unable to say whether some difficult recorded event was an actual fact or only founded on fact, or a popular story, or an early picture

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based on early narrative." In fact, they seemed to know very little about it. Even a Church Congress has to make some concessions to truth. Professor Bernard raised a lament concerning "the ignorance which candidates for Holy Orders display of the books of the Old Testament"—perhaps that is why they declare that they "unfeignedly believe all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments"—and administered a piece of advice to the effect that they should beware of using "methods of exposition which we should brand as puerile or dishonest in any other branch of inquiry"—an exordium that discloses the inner nature of the clerical mind far more effectively than a direct attack would do. And, finally, Canon Watson concluded that "the materials of the historical books [of the Bible] have the general character of ancient records. They are meagre; they are unequal in their treatment of things; they are incomplete from a literary or historical point of view; the editors were probably separated by centuries from the events which they describe; their knowledge of the facts was imperfect; they were one-sided in their interests."

As usual, the discussion of social reforms was left until the fag end of the Congress. This took the shape of a paper read by the Rev. J. Horsley on "The Housing of the Poor." I take the following sentences therefrom as a commentary upon the text that "under the shadow of Christianity humane institutions have always flourished":—

> "Sarcastic seems the phrase 'the housing of the poor' when the facts recur to one's mind of the 124,000 people in our civil parish living on less than a mile square; of nearly half a million in London whose home consists of one room; of 4,575 one-roomed homes in Spitalfields, of which 1,400 are occupied by numbers rising from four to eleven persons; of nearly a quarter of all babes born near me dying before they are a year old; of seventeen persons found to be inhabiting a single room in my neighbouring parish, Camberwell; of 3,000 persons to the acre, through the agency of industrial dwellings, in one part of Whitechapel."

A pretty picture, this, of a large portion of our population, after all the "Church's progress"! And the unfortunate part of it is its truth. It is conditions such as these that are creating problems that, unless promptly attended to, threaten to ruin our civilisation—far more so than the question of the efficiency of the Army and Navy, or the loss of a campaign. Mr. Horsley was showing that even the Church cannot kill the common sense of some people in stating the *secular* conclusion that "criminals and drunkards are made by overcrowded insanitary areas, not attracted to them from elsewhere. It is the stye that fouls the pig before the pig further fouls the stye, and.....therefore bad landlords, whether of village hovels or city slums, are chiefly responsible for crime." Long ago Owen and the early Freethought reformers taught the same lesson, and were branded as dangerous and immoral for so doing. Once more the Christian has to come back to the despised Secular standpoint to understand the real nature of the problems confronting him.

And what are the Churches, as organisations, doing? Positively nothing. The Rev. James Adderley "feared it was true that Agnostics and unbelievers took more practical interest in this question than Church people." Father Adderley might further have satisfied himself, by a little examination, that a great deal of this slum property is actually owned by the very Church at whose Congress he was assisting. And, even were it not so, neither Church nor Chapel would dare to make a direct onslaught on those who are directly responsible for the half million whose home is made up of one room. They can preach, and they can advocate charity: two excellent preventives of any drastic reform—the one deluding people into the belief that they are helping to improve things; the other, at most, representing but a fraction of the amount that would have to be spent were wages paid and rents regulated so as to render a decent living possible in its absence.

Can anyone doubt that, had the Churches devoted half the energy they manifest in constructing new places of worship to the creation of a strong public opinion on the subject, the matter might be well within sight of settlement? They can build elaborate "joss-houses" in squalid districts, and thus place before the people a visible emblem of their own degradation; they can raise, and spend, nearly a million and a-half sterling on foreign missions; the country can be roused on the question of Church ceremonials, or the rival claims of Church and Chapel; but on this far more vital question of the mental, moral, and physical well-being of hundreds of thousands of people it can do little but offer up vague hopes that the conscience of the nation may be enlightened—a hope that offends no one, inspires no one, and leaves things exactly as they were.

C. Cohen.

Did Christ Really Live?

In my article last week I dealt with the nature of myths, and pointed out how belief in them was perpetuated. I propose now to give some reasons for regarding the story of Christ, as recorded in the New Testament, as unhistorical. It is not my intention to dispute that a man by the name of Jesus lived two thousand years ago. Josephus refers to more than one person of the same name who lived about that time. My contention is that there is no historical evidence that the Christ (which really means the anointed) who is professed to be believed in by Christians ever existed. Remembering the period in which he *is said* to have lived, the many remarkable deeds it is alleged he performed, and the numerous historians who wrote about that time, it is certainly extraordinary, upon the supposition that he existed, that no secular writer of the first century even alludes to the Jesus called Christ. One of the principal Christian contributors to the recently-published volume, *The Ancient Faith in Modern Light*, in deploring the lack of evidence as to the inception of the Christian faith, thus writes:—

> "It is a singular fact that secular history, which relates the advance of the Christian faith, gives the very scantiest account of its origin—gives, indeed, no account at all.....It seems as though the men who might have rendered this inestimable service were smitten with mental blindness; the whole Christian movement was to them so small, so weak, so entirely unimportant, that it never occurred to them to trace it to its source. They held it to be a local folly, a provincial fanaticism, which might well be left alone with good-natured contempt" (p. 87).

Now, it appears incredible that this historical silence should have obtained if such a person as the Christ of the Gospels actually lived. And yet, apart from the New Testament, there is not the slightest trustworthy evidence that he existed. This is the more strange upon the supposition that Jesus was equal with God. For if he were an omnipotent being it is legitimate to conclude that he would have exercised his power, and have given to the world a faithful history of his life.

It has been repeatedly urged that Josephus (A.D. 40) and Tacitus (A.D. 110) mentioned the name of Christ. As regards the former, it is now generally admitted, even by Christian scholars, that the principal passage in Josephus's writings where the name of Jesus occurs is a forgery. Its internal evidence goes to prove it to be an interpolation. Dr. Lardner gives up its authenticity, and points out that it was never quoted by Christian writers before Eusebius; that the name of Christ is nowhere else mentioned in any of Josephus's works; that the language is purely Christian; that the introduction of Christ's name entirely interrupts the narrative; and that, although Chrysostom and Photius both refer to Josephus, they never allude to the disputed passage. Dean Milman says: "It is interpolated with many additional clauses" (Milman's *Gibbon*, vol. ii., p. 285). Bishop Warburton calls the passage "a rank forgery" (*Divine Legation of Moses*, book ii., sec. 6). Rev. Dr. Giles also condemns it as a forgery (*Hebrew and Christian Records*, vol. ii., p. 62). Dean Farrar says: "The single passage in which he [Josephus] alludes to him [Christ] is interpolated, if not wholly spurious" (*Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 46). Dr. Edersheim says: "The expressions attributed to Josephus must have been altered, and in some parts interpolated, by later writers" (*Dictionary of Ecclesiastical History and Biography*, article "Josephus"). Gibbon says that this passage "was inserted into the text of Josephus

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between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius," and "may furnish an example of no vulgar forgery" (chap. xvi., footnote). And De Quincey, in his essay on the Essenes, emphatically says that "this passage has long been given up as a forgery by all the men not lunatic" (*Works*, vol. ix.).

The passage in Tacitus in which Christ is mentioned is to be found in the *Annals*, not in the History. There is no proof that the passage was ever referred to until the fifteenth century. Doane, in his *Bible Myths*, gives seventeen reasons for believing the passage to be an interpolation. But something even more important than this should be remembered. In 1878 a valuable work was published in London under the title of *Tacitus and Bracciolini: The Annals Forged in the Fifteenth Century*. The object of the writer was to show that the *Annals* in which the passage referring to Christ appears were not written by Tacitus, but were forged in the fifteenth century by the famous Poggio Bracciolini. The author says: "I give a detailed history of the forgery, from its conception to its completion, the sum that was paid for it, the abbey where it was transcribed, and other convincing minutiæ taken from a correspondence that Poggio carried on with a familiar friend who resided in Florence." It thus appears that there is no historical evidence that the earliest secular writers of the Christian era knew anything of the existence of Jesus, "the anointed one."

Another most important fact which should not be overlooked when dealing with the story of Christ is that the main features of Christianity have almost an exact parallel in the records of previous religions. Take, for instance, the stories of Krishna and Buddha. Incidents and wonders are associated with the legends of their lives similar to those ascribed to the career of Christ. There is a striking allusion in Justin's *Apology* bearing on the similarity of Christian and Pagan beliefs. Justin, writing in the middle of the second century, says:—

> "When we say that the Logos, who is the first birth of God, was produced without sexual union, and that Jesus Christ, our teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you [the Pagans] believe regarding those whom you esteem as sons of Jupiter."

If this be true, there can be no doubt as to the unhistorical character of the story of Christ. When we read in the New Testament of a virgin birth—that is, a child being born without a human father; of the devil taking Jesus up to a high mountain and showing him all the kingdoms of the world; of his having a meal of fish and honeycomb, and then being carried up into heaven; of his being "born of a woman," and yet, like Melchisedec, "without mother"; of people being possessed of devils; of the dead being restored to life after the body had become decomposed—I say, when we read stories like these, we know that we are in the region of fable and romance, and not upon the solid ground of historical facts. True, Jesus is represented as being of real flesh and blood; but the idea of his rising from the grave, after being deprived of all natural power, and appearing in a room while the doors were shut, is utterly opposed to all ideas of reality.

The perpetual repetition of the Gospel stories in modern times shows that the mythical still rules the Christian mind. This is specially manifest in the present revival of the old tradition about the fall of Jerusalem being the signal for the Messiah descending from heaven and the final triumph of the Jews. The latest form which this story has taken is that we are upon the eve of the reign of Christ and the triumph of his saints. The growth of the Christian faith, built on ancient myths, affords a striking illustration of orthodox inconsistency and credulity. At first, poor fishermen, weavers, and tanners, we are told, met for worship in private houses; but now their successors assemble in costly structures, while they repeat the same old stories that deluded their superstitious predecessors. Fortunately, however, there is a rapidly increasing section of the community who will not be misled by the fables of the past. Many of the greatest thinkers of to-day recognise that the Christianity of the New Testament has no historical foundation, and that its teachings are only valuable in sustaining the creeds and dogmas of an expiring faith.

Charles Watts.

William Morris.

> "What good is like to this—
> To do worthy the writing, and to write
> Worthy the reading and the world's delight?"
> —Samuel Daniel.

William Morris died in 1896. Even yet the great body of readers have but a slight acquaintance with his work, and lie under the delusion that he was an able but monotonous poet and a graceless iconoclast, with a weakness for fine printing and artistic wall-papers. Such is the impression still prevalent regarding a writer whose ability is hardly less noteworthy than his versatility in the world of art, and respecting a man who had so greatly moulded the finer minds of his generation. Much of his work may prove of transient interest; but when time has done what criticism can but feebly attempt, and severed the gold from the dross, there will still remain a precious legacy to his country. Concerning his artistic work there need only be a passing remark here. Its influence has been, and probably will continue to be, one of profound value.

Morris's literary works fill many volumes, his verse alone occupying ten. A poet who comes before the world with so vast a body of verse must have no insignificant claims in order to justify his pretensions. Morris's merits lie, for the most part, upon the surface. In the art of story-telling in verse he is without a modern rival. He is also eminently lucid. Like Macaulay, in prose, the reader is never for a moment in doubt of the writer's meaning. His verse demands no intellectual effort. His ideas are never crushed and smothered beneath the jewelled panoply of the diction. He never sacrifices the spirit to the letter; alliterating not wisely, but too well. Morris, of all modern writers, is the one whose poetry approaches most closely to the "sweet-souled master," Chaucer, although the modern poet wanted the humor of the old bard. *The Earthly Paradise*, like *The Canterbury Tales*, contains a number of stories linked together by a thread, and is singularly adapted to Morris's genius. It affords him the amplest scope to his craft as a story-teller. Happily, Morris understood the limitations of his muse. He rarely attempts to do what he cannot do well, and, while the reader is never carried off his feet as

> One who drinks from a charmed cup
> Of foaming and sparkling and murmuring wine,

he is never allowed to sink to the lower slopes of Parnassus, where browseth the minor poet. Morris's perfect mastery of English, the splendid ease with which he tells a story, and his fidelity to nature, leave no doubt with whom his place must be in the appreciation of all those who love real literature.

The Life and Death of Jason is a poem of more than ten thousand lines. Another goodly volume contains *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung*. *The Defence of Guenevere*, *Poems by the Way*, and *Love is Enough* make two thick books. His translations of Virgil's *Æneid* and Homer's *Odyssey* increase the bulk and add largely to the value of Morris's poetical works.

Perhaps William Morris will be none the less regretted that he had accomplished so much of the task he had set himself. He left the stamp of a vigorous individuality on English art and English literature. His sustained energy, his fearlessness, united to his genius, were sure to assert, sooner or later, the influence he had fully resolved on exciting. He never shrank from advocating his views. He saw there were wrongs to redress, and he came forward as the champion of the sufferers impotently struggling under the artificial conditions of a corrupt civilisation.

William Morris loved nature in all her moods. His affection comes out in his descriptions, fresh as with dews of dawn, and remembered with quickened pulse. And while the landscape outlines are dashed in broadly with unmistakeable truth and force, there are as many of those telling touches of detail. So vivid and so truthful are his verbal pictures that the reader is more often under the impression of reviving familiar recollection than of being startled by new and unlooked-for beauties. Morris won a high reputation for his ballads. The modern ballad, written in the old style, suggested the joke that Morris wrote "Wardour Street" English. The sham antique is seldom a success. The simplest

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form of poetry is hardly fitted to inspire nineteenth-century poets; there is generally a literary tone which mars their affected simplicity. The attempt is usually but idle weaving of sand, fit only, to use his own apt phrase, for "an idle singer of an empty day."

Christianity was not likely to fascinate an intellect that admired the more vigorous qualities of the older mythologies. The influence of Paganism permeated his thought. The gods of the north had vanished; but, contrasted with the raw religiosity of a "nation of shop-keepers," they seemed to the poet's eyes to shine low, bright, and beautiful upon the mental horizon, distance touching them with a strange glamor that all but made him forget their horrors.

Morris's Freethought comes out clearly in his treatment of the subject of death. He is as materialistic as Swinburne in regarding death as "the poppied sleep, the end of all." To him there is no life beyond the grave. This thought is expressed constantly in his verse. The wanderers, who, having vainly sought an earthly paradise, found instead that their wasted lives ended

> Where all things end in death at last,

are still eager to gain some pleasure out of the dregs of life; for,

> Since a little life at least was left,
> They were not yet of every joy bereft.

In *The Doom of King Acrisius* there is a very beautiful picture of two lovers thrilled with a finer tenderness by the idea of the final parting. "O love, to think that love can pass away" is the sad thought of Andromeda, still flushed with joy; and Perseus, in reply, says if she needs must think of the dull night that is creeping on, then for that thought let her hold closer to her bliss.

The same thought is the burden of a song in *Ogier the Dane*:—

> Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
> What thing cometh after death?

The apathy of old age lulled to rest the seekers after the Earthly Paradise. Their life had been a failure:—

> Lo!
> A long life gone, and nothing more they know—
> Why they should live to have desire and foil,
> And toil that overcome brings yet more toil
> Than that day of their vanished youth, when first
> They saw Death clear, and deemed all life accurst
> By that cold overshadowing threat—the end.

Such was Morris's view of death—the view of a man whose mind dwelt among noble memories and imperishable ideals; whose sole business in life was to bring culture to those of his fellow-men who were contented with lesser recollections and ignoble desires. Was he too confident, too presumptuous? We hope not. It is the element of truth in the grand Republican ideal of men as being equal, brotherly, and free which gives to it and to its like their strength. But between us and the land in which all this shall be realized a wide and raging flood rolls. A bridge must be built, slowly and patiently, to the further mist-hidden shore. William Morris was a master-craftsman who helped to build this bridge. Future travellers will turn and look up, and see what this brave poet's hands could rear.

MIMNERMUS.

Bishops and Hairpins.

"Girls' hairpins frequently lacerate Bishops' fingers during the 'laying-on of hands.'"—*Christian World.*

For those who care for science not a rap—
The folk in whom "The Faith" still fondly lingers—
The Bishops keep the Holy Ghost "on tap,"
And switch Him on with grace-exuding fingers.

By "laying-on of hands" the Bishops pose
As specialists in Holy Ghost conduction,
Through whom, to dupes, divine afflatus flows,
In spite of thickest cranial obstruction.

A bishop's fingers force the ghost of God
To penetrate the skull whereon he sticks them;
And nought on earth can foil the prelate's prod,
Except, perhaps, a hairpin, when it pricks them.

We're told 'tis true that Christians all are proof
'Gainst "deadly things"; but, clearly, it is truer
That ghost-blown priests, inspired from head to hoof,
Are never proof against a top-knot skewer,
As "wand'ring leads" of God's electric grace,
Their Lordships leak when pointed hairpins tap them;
And—sadder still—are forced to *un*-embrace
The lasses' heads; and feel inclined to slap them.

MORAL.

O men of God whom hairpins prod!
Your palmy days have fled;
Your tricks are known; leave girls alone,
And try to earn your bread!
Give up your job, nor longer rob
The living and the dead!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

God's Goodness.

THE race exposes itself to peril because it cannot do otherwise. In all the world there is no city of refuge—no temple in which to take sanctuary, clinging to the horns of the altar—no "place apart" where, like hunted deer, we can hope to elude the baying pack of nature's tireless malevolences. The dead-line is drawn at the gate of life: man crosses it at birth. His advent is a challenge to the entire gang—earthquake, storm, fire, flood, drought, heat, cold, wild beasts, venomous reptiles, noxious insects, spectacular plague and velvet-footed household disease—all are loud and fierce in pursuit. Dodge, turn, and double how he can, there's no eluding them; soon or late some of them have him by the throat, and "his spirit returns to the God who gave it"—and gave them.

We are told that this earth was made for our inhabiting. Our dearly-beloved brethren in the faith, our spiritual guides, philosophers, and friends of the pulpit, never tire of pointing out the goodness of God in giving us so excellent a place to live in, and commending the admirable adaptation of all things to our needs. Why, three-fourths of this delectable field of human activity are covered with an element in which we cannot breathe, and which swallows us by myriads:—

> With mouldering bones the deep is white,
> From the frozen poles to the tropics bright.

Of the other one-fourth more than one-half is uninhabitable by reason of climate. On the remaining one-eighth we pass a comfortless and precarious existence in disputed occupancy with all these and countless other ministers of death and pain—pass it in fighting for it, tooth and nail, a hopeless battle in which we are foredoomed to defeat. And the prize for which we strive "to have and to hold"—what is it? A thing that is neither enjoyed while had, nor missed when lost. So worthless it is, so unsatisfying, so inadequate to purpose, so false to hope, and at its best so brief, that for consolation and compensation we set up fantastic faiths of an aftertime in a better world, from which no confirming whisper has ever reached us out of the void. Heaven is a prophecy uttered by the lips of despair, but hell is an inference from history.

—*Ambrose Bierce.*

Church and Society.

A REASON why the Church is one of the most important society factors known is that it is a regular thing. Receptions are intermittent, calls may be delayed, dinners restricted, but the Church is regular and gregarious enough to cover a multitude of sins.

A woman in church has an opportunity to observe her social superior, which that individual would never otherwise bestow on her. The church also offers cover for quiet reflection and observation, which are invaluable to the society woman.

The ideal church consists of a mixed element. Spencer's law that we develop from homogeneity to heterogeneity is quite proper here. Simplicity characterised the church at first; but this was too primitive to last. A few millionaires, and a greater number of semi-millionaires, are indispensable to the working of the Church that aims to preserve the highest social traditions.

There should also be a sprinkling of the poor. They give an air of respectability to the whole affair.

Church is held one day in the week, and is a place where women assemble to think over their neighbors' sins and what they wear.

Men once went to church, but they have been driven away by the clergy. Now they stay away and play golf.

Church-going is one of the most delightful social functions, when properly indulged in. It serves also as a soothing amelioration for certain inconsistencies, while in its revised and modern form it is not irritating enough to be disagreeable. It is a medium of intercourse between those who have got there and those who want to.

Social aspirants cannot always expect to get admitted at once to the best churches. But money helps; and, once in, the clergyman may introduce you to some of the leaders, if you are good and practise the best form.

Without church-going many people to-day would not be in society.—*Puck.*

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Acid Drops.

We hope it is true that the new young King of Italy is a Freethinker. In that case he may be trusted to better his father's example in dealing with the arrogant Papacy. We read that another Catholic priest has been condemned to a heavy fine and six months' imprisonment for saying in his pulpit that the assassination of King Humbert was no sin. This is the eighth man of God who has been punished for the same offence. It is a great mistake to suppose that the Catholic Church is quite opposed to assassination. It all depends on who is assassinated, and what he is assassinated for. If he is an enemy of the Church, his assassin is only an agent of the divine anger. Students of history are well aware that the Church has instigated, or approved, a considerable number of such crimes during the last four or five hundred years. Previously, when the Church excommunicated refractory monarchs, it used to treat the assassination of such rulers as a virtuous and laudable act on the part of any rebellious subject or private enemy. So long as its foes were got out of the way, the Church was never particular as to the method adopted.

The holy influence of the Vatican seems not to have preserved its Treasury from theft. Three hundred and fifty-seven thousand francs have been purloined from its coffers. Certain inmates of the Vatican are suspected of being concerned in the theft.

Pilgrimages, or rather religious trips, to Rome are being organised by the Catholic Association. The price for the tour is £6 15s., travelling, board, and lodging included; and the route is *via* Paris, to give the pilgrims (or trippers) an opportunity of seeing the Exhibition. The dear old Pope receives them at the Vatican and eases them of their Peter's Pence, which we suppose he wants rather badly after being robbed of some £20,000 by burglars.

Catholic writers of fiction are fairly numerous in England. A list of them has been compiled by the *Tablet*. It includes the following names:—F. Marion Crawford, Bernard Capes, Dorothea Gerard, Ella D'Arcy, Mrs. Parr, Adeline Sergeant, Katharine Tynan, Conan Doyle, F. C. Burnand, Lady Gilbert, Clara Mulholland, John Oliver Hobbes, Fitzgerald Molloy, George Egerton, George Moore, Max Pemberton, Mrs. Clement Shorter, Clement Scott, A. á Becket, Sir Hubert Jerningham, Miss Forbes Robertson, Florence Maryatt, Mrs. Wilfrid Ward, Justin McCarthy, and Father William Barry.

We never heard before that Conan Doyle was a Catholic. Judging from some of his writings, he is more of a Freethinker. Anyhow, George Meredith and Thomas Hardy are Freethinkers, and their names outweigh by a vast deal the whole *Tablet* collection.

The Unionists gained a seat in the Blackfriars division of Glasgow. We hope Mr. A. D. Provand, who lost the seat, did not do so altogether in consequence of his refusal to support the state-establishment of a Catholic University in Ireland. On this subject, according to the *Glasgow Herald*, Mr. Provand "spoke with an emphasis which is rare in a parliamentary candidate." He objected to give money for sectarian purposes, and said he would be in favor of taking money from any university where religion was taught. This gave great umbrage to the Irish party in the division, who called upon their "fellow countrymen" to vote solidly against him.

Soul-savers have generally a good eye for the meat which perisheth. They make the best of the next world for us, and the best of this world for themselves. Take the Rev. H. R. Haweis, for instance. This gentleman, having two months' leave of absence from his own church in London, where we believe he is tolerably well paid, went down to Birchington-on-Sea for a good holiday. But he resolved to combine business with pleasure. Accordingly he held some highly successful Sunday meetings in a big Variety Hall at Margate. They were so successful, indeed, that he decided to extend his profitable enterprise to Ramsgate, and announced a series of Sunday meetings in St. George's Hall. The Archbishop of Canterbury, however, objected to these gatherings as likely to draw worshippers away from their regular churches and chapels; and Mr. Haweis thought it advisable to cancel the engagement. It appears that the seats were to have been a shilling in front and sixpence at the back; and, lest these prices should be considered excessive in the case of a professional soul-saver, who was already blessed with a good and regular income, it was notified that "at New York Mr. Haweis received one pound a minute." Whether he earned it or not is another matter. Certainly no such payment as one pound a minute was received by Jesus Christ, not even for the time he spent upon the cross. Evidently, therefore, the Rev. Mr. Haweis is a great deal luckier than his Savior.

Twenty-five lady missionaries, bound for India, had a "send off" the other evening at the Queen's Hall. Chancellor P. Vernon Smith, who presided, made the curious observation that the famine in India had shown the necessity for the spread of the Kingdom of Christ. This is the first time we ever heard that Christianity had an influence on the weather. Chancellor Smith, however, seems to think so, although in a rather circuitous fashion. "Although Christianity," he said, "would not prevent famine, yet the spread of the Kingdom of Christ tended to reduce to the least possible amount the natural evils of pestilence and famine, and other things which occurred in the providence of God." The speaker's meaning is not very clear, but he seems to convey the idea that God, in his providence, deals out less pestilence, famine, and other things, to the people who profess and call themselves Christians, and reserves all his surplus stock of such afflictions for the poor heathen. We suspect, however, that the Christians receive less of these providential attentions because they chiefly inhabit the more temperate regions of the earth.

The *Examiner* exposes a flagrant piece of clerical bigotry in connection with a Board school appointment. An excellent elementary schoolmaster was recommended strongly to a country School Board by the Government Inspector. When interviewed by the Board, he was told that he would be expected to teach the Catechism. Having resigned his position as a national school teacher because he could not conscientiously inculcate baptismal regeneration, he explained his views to the members. The vicar of the parish was present as one of the Board, and, needless to say, the candidate's claims were passed over, though the other members of the Board had previously been quite prepared to give him the appointment, his credentials being in every respect most satisfactory. He was afterwards informed by the Inspector that if he had telegraphed instead of waiting on the Board, he would have been appointed. This is one of many instances where a premium is placed on insincerity.

Well might Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman inquire in a recent speech: "What in the world have schools to do with either Church or parson?" The ecclesiastics, he added, must not be allowed to stint and corrupt and twist and divert and occupy our educational system so as to prejudice its development. What we want, he said, is a great national, democratically governed, unsectarian, comprehensive system of education. Exactly; that is the national requirement, and sooner or later it will have to be met.

Quoting this declaration of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the *Church Times* says: "If the Church and the parsons had never had to do with schools, Sir Henry would at this day have been adorning his person with woad, after the manner of his heathen ancestors."

Did anyone ever read such an idiotic observation? What does the *Church Times* mean by it? Not only is it unintelligible, it is grossly offensive; though one could hardly take offence at anything that this dull and obfuscated Ritualistic print chooses to say. Still, it would be interesting to know, as a pathological study of imbecility, what could have been floating in its mind when it gave to its readers the above-quoted nonsense.

In the diocese of Lichfield a Million Shillings' Fund has been started, with the object of extending the work of the Established Church in parishes "which are not able to keep pace with the times." The Million Shillings' Fund might have some sort of claim to support amongst Churchmen if the Church itself kept "pace with the times." But that, apparently, is quite too much to expect. The Bishop of Lichfield, at a public meeting, said that the scheme had been first suggested to him in a letter from a clergyman, who pointed out what the Nonconformist bodies were doing. The Bishop, of course, could not be expected to know, until thus informed, what sort of schemes low-class Dissenting folks had on foot. Hitherto, we had thought that this absurd affectation of ignorance of what is known to everybody else was confined to Her Majesty's judges.

Leo XIII. is reported to be busy at the composition of his new Encyclical. Its subject is "Christian Democracy," and it may be regarded as a continuation of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* which dealt with Christian Socialism. In a marvellously tolerant fashion, for which we ought to be inexpressibly grateful, he proposes to accord his approbation to certain demands of democracy. He intends, however, to condemn "abuses" of democracy, notably of the Atheistic Revolutionaries. Poor old man, his political power is practically gone, but it pleases him to think that the nations are still at his feet.

A missionary asked a pundit to put into the Hindoo vernacular the hymn, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee." Shortly afterwards he heard his converts singing with pious fervor, "Very old stone, split for my benefit, let me get under one of your fragments."

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Mr. Tim Healy is reported to have asked an elector for his vote, and to have received the answer: "I would rather vote for Satan." Whereupon, as the report goes, Tim sweetly said: "I am very thankful to you for your candor; but, in case your friend should be unable to put in an appearance at the poll, may I count on your vote?"

We don't want to call the reporter of this "incident" a liar. But the story is a very old one, and we are astonished to see so many newspapers printing it as a novelty. It is at least as old as John Wilkes's candidature at Westminster, and perhaps a good deal older. As we read the story a good many years ago, one of the electors said to Wilkes: "I would sooner vote for the Devil." "Yes," replied Wilkes, "but in case your friend doesn't stand?" This is neater than the new version, and wittier too, if brevity is the soul of wit.

Whitewashing the Bible men of God is a pretty stiff undertaking. Such a quantity of whitewash is needed, and it has to be laid on so thick. Even then great black splotches *will* show through. The Rev. Dr. C. F. Richardson recently undertook the task in a sermon which is printed in the *Methodist Times*. He makes a very poor job of it. There are spots, he says, on the sun. No doubt; and there are some tremendous big spots on the characters of the patriarchs and prophets. The blemishes are natural enough if we regard these men as mere ordinary human beings. The point is that the Bible saints are not presented to us in that light at all. They are supposed to be the special servants, favorites, and associates of the Lord; and, except in regard to one or two cases of glaring iniquity, the Scriptural scribes do not appear to recognise that there is anything wrong about them.

Dr. Richardson takes occasion to allude to the writings of Bradlaugh and Ingersoll. Both men, he says, are dead, and "both will soon be forgotten." Will they, indeed? It doesn't look like it just at present. But if they are in time forgotten—which we do not for a moment believe—their work will live. This preacher himself tacitly admits their influence, and the influence of other Freethinkers, by the trouble he wastes on his weak apologetics, and the admissions he is forced to make.

The Lord might at least take care of his "faithful." It doesn't say much for his watchfulness when he allows the students of his Holy Word to go raving mad, and in one of his own cathedrals too. During service the other Sunday, in Rochester Cathedral, a young man, known as a local preacher and Christian Endeavorer, suddenly rose from his seat, and began to wave his hands and make incoherent remarks about having been chosen by the Lord as the instrument by which certain things were to be accomplished. One lady fainted, and others were so upset that they left the cathedral. The young man was sent to the infirmary by the police, pending his removal to an asylum.

Apparently in order to give the Gospel-shops and the beer-shops undisturbed play on the blessed Sabbath, the Leyton Library Committee have for the fifth time rejected a proposal to open that institution on Sunday.

At Colwyn Bay there has been a great outcry against Sunday golf. At the annual meeting of the Golf Club a strong protest was received. It is satisfactory to note that the Rev. Venables Williams defended Sunday golf, though one would like to know whether he would be equally favorable to a less fashionable pastime on the Lord's Day. Anyhow, it was decided to disregard the protest.

Still another religious sect! This time it is a religious community, established at Kieff, with idleness for its chief tenet. Its members are known as the Malevanchina, and they reject all work except that of the household. The sect might find many votaries in our own West-end. Taking the whole of our happy Christian land, we might find not a few parsons who come as near as possible to this new form of holiness.

The incumbent of St. Mark's, Battersea Rise, seems to be a charitable sort of cleric. Recently he published in his *Church and Home Magazine* the following astounding paragraph: "——, who has obtained such an unenviable notoriety on account of his pro-Boer sympathies, lived not long ago close by St. Mark's, but he no longer resides in Battersea. Our own member is quite enough of that persuasion for any one parish. ——'s son at one time attended Emanuel School, from which he was expelled for gross misconduct. He is now, we understand, fighting as a C.I.V. in the Transvaal, against his father's friends; the Boers, thus, we hope, making up for his father's lack of patriotism and his own early misdeeds." The malicious reference to the youthful misdeeds of one who has since been fighting under his country's flag is worthy of a Church of England clergyman.

It says something for the progress of Secular principles when the Bishop of Ripon is led to make such admissions as are contained in his paper on "The Home Work of the Century," read at the Church Congress. "Within the last thirty years," he said, "an enlargement of the scope of the Christian aim has taken place. The religious impulse no longer confines itself to what was once called religious work; pious people do not now frown upon philanthropic work as being of secondary value and only humanitarian. Almost irresistibly the organisations which were started for a definitely spiritual object have been drawn into social channels." This surely is a step in the right direction, though it has taken the Church a long time to venture upon it.

Says the *Church Gazette:* "What we consider one of the least lovely features of modern Church policy is its determined effort to force upon populations its own special type of primary education, wherever the circumstances permit a monopoly. The idea is in itself simply hateful, and makes an honest Churchman blush for his Churchmanship. But Church leaders and organisers never blush at all."

Still more testimony on the worse than futility of Christian missions to China. Mr. F. Thorold Dickson, in the October number of *Macmillan's*, writes: "It is not difficult to imagine the infinite mischief that has been wrought in China Proper by telling not only men of an intellectual class, but the fanatical, narrow-minded officials at the top of the social ladder, and the seething millions, the ignorant superstitious masses who believe anything and everything that those above them wish them to believe, that their religion is all wrong, and that they must adopt ours. No wonder that at the present moment all China is ablaze from one end to another."

The Rev. Mark Guy Pearse has had a funny, though not a very flattering, experience in a Cornish village. He happened to stroll into a chapel tea-meeting, where he hoped to escape recognition. But one of the "brethren" knew him, and, coming to him, whispered cautiously: "Be you the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse?" "I be." "I thought so. Now, would 'ee do us a favor?" Mr. Pearse signified that he would if he could. "Well, 'ee see, we be wanting to raise some money, and a thought have come on us. We seed 'ee, and thought that if 'ee 'ud come out quiet like, without saying nothing, we can put 'ee in the vestry. Then we goes into chapel and says: 'Rev. Mark Guy Pearse, author of *Daniel Quorm*, is in the vestry, and can be seen for threepence; collection to go to the cause.'"

A well-known bishop recently gave an address to a large gathering of Sunday-school teachers. This is one of the things he said: "Take my advice, teachers, and never have more than thirty scholars at a time in your class." And he does not know now why his hearers smiled. The *Sunday Companion* suggests that, when there is so much difficulty in securing the attention of even twelve, the bishop might well have spared his advice.

The Rev. Price Hughes told the new Wesleyan ministers in London that they should not preach longer than half-an-hour, for Londoners could not stand long sermons. True, quite true, most noble Hughes; and there are countless Londoners who can't stand sermons at all, either long or short.

Apropos of this there is related the following story of Lord Rosebery and Dr. Creighton:—The peer said that there were times when, overworked, he could not sleep at all, and envied those who could do so. The Bishop replied: "Well, my lord, I never suffer from sleeplessness, I can assure you." "Indeed!" said Lord Rosebery. "Perhaps, then, you will tell me how you do this. I shall be glad to try your cure." "Yes, I will tell you," said Dr. Creighton, smiling blandly. "Whenever I feel weary I sit down and commence to write a sermon—then I'm 'off' in a few minutes. If, however, I commence to read a sermon, I am 'off' in a very few seconds." "Ah, my lord," replied Lord Rosebery, "of two evils I think I will choose the least! Much rather would I go without sleep than read a sermon!"

On the ever-recurring question, Why won't people go to church? the *Church Gazette* says: "What we have observed is the general prevalence of such an amount of twaddlesomeness as will fairly excuse any sane man from going to church or chapel, on the score of its meaning a great waste of valuable time."

"Twaddlesomeness" is a good word applied to Gospel-shop performances. We thank the *Church Gazette* for it.

Mrs. Mary Alicia La Bau, one of Commodore Vanderbilt's daughters, is sued in the Supreme Court by one Dodge to recover 20,000 dollars as a balance due on a contract to purchase a quarter interest in patents right from him for 1,000 dollars. In her answer Mrs. La Bau alleges fraud.

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She says that, knowing her to be a Spiritualist, Dodge employed mediums to deliver her messages from the spirit world advising her to invest in his concern. She has already given him 40,000 dollars.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Rev. George C. Lorimer, pastor of Tremont Temple, Boston, has refused the offer of an increase of one thousand dollars in his salary, and his extraordinary self-denial is being duly celebrated by the American press. It appears, however, that his salary is already seven thousand dollars a year, which is supplemented by his earnings as an author. When an apostle of the poor Nazarene is in receipt of something like £2,000 a year, it is perhaps about time that he stopped burdening himself with what is calculated to keep him from entering the kingdom of heaven.

Dr. Lorimer says that his present income is sufficient to fully answer his wants. We should think it was. Jesus Christ would probably say ditto with much emphasis. The founder of Christianity never saw so much money as £2,000 in his life—not even when he upset the tables of the money-changers.

Ellen Clements, of the Salvation Army, died while praying at Bacup. She was holding a public conversation with the Lord in the Drill Hall when she suddenly collapsed. Some might think that the Lord could stand it no longer, but the doctors say it was a case of heart disease.

Had a Secular lecturer fallen dead in the middle of his address, the Christians would have looked upon it as a "judgment." When such an accident happens to a Christian speaker they do not see that it has any meaning.

Bismarck's last words, according to Dr. Oncken, Professor of History in the University of Gieszen, were as follows: "Dear Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief, and receive me into thy heavenly kingdom." The professor does not state whether Bismarck was "received," or whether he had to apply elsewhere. The most interesting point is so often omitted.

Dr. Variot, of Paris, according to a Lisbon paper, has discovered a process for embalming bodies which, it is thought, will prove a great success. He not only embalms, but mentalises the bodies by the Ruolt process, just as is done with a fork or spoon. In this manner they can be preserved indefinitely, and to such perfection that the most imperceptible wrinkles and lines are reproduced, and the embalmed body has the appearance of a metal statue. The process is as follows: After a bath in pure carbolic acid and being strongly rubbed with nitrate of silver, the body is submerged in a galvanic-plastic bath, after which a slight layer of nitrate is applied to it. Nickel-plated saints arising at the sound of Gabriel's trump will, it is conceived, lend glitter, if not impressiveness, to the resurrection.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

A Wakefield local preacher is in trouble. His name is Henry Hillaby, and he was a burning and shining light amongst the Primitive Methodists. He took a trip to America; but the police went after him, and have brought him back—for embezzlement. He is now in free lodgings. It is uncertain when he will preach again.

William Barrett murdered his wife at Plaistow in August. The details of his crime were so shocking that women were ordered out of court during the trial. He was hung at Chelmsford after the regulation interval of spiritual refreshment. He took the sacrament an hour or so before his execution, so that he may be said to have died with the body and blood of Christ inside him. His last words were, "O Lord, help me!" He does not appear to have been troubled as to whether the Lord had helped his wife.

"England," says the Rev. G. S. Reaney, "will never be saved by parsons and priests." Of course not. We have often said so. And we are glad to see it confirmed by a good authority.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach has let the cat out of the bag with regard to the dole of £600,000 per annum to the denominational schools. Speaking at Bristol the other day, he said that without it these schools would have ceased. In other words, the "voluntary" contributions were so declining that the Government had to hurry up to the parsons' relief; and now, instead of uncertain charity, they have regular State grants, without the addition of public control.

"My dear brethren," said a Baptist preacher, "I can only give you now what God will send me; but to-night I will come better prepared." This story floated about at the recent Baptist Conference.

Baptist preachers, in Conference assembled, have been troubling their poor heads—some of them are *very* poor—over the question of cigarette smoking. Indeed, they passed a strong resolution on the subject, especially in relation to juvenile whiffers. It did not occur to these solemn gentlemen that what *they* have to save us from is not the smoke of tobacco, but the smoke of hell. Perhaps the lads who affect cigarettes are only training for their future habitat.

At the Church Congress discussion on "The Housing of the People," the Hon. and Rev. J. Adderley, of Victoria Park, London, said that "His own experience was that agnostics, unbelievers, and freethinkers were much more active in these matters than churchmen." Well, there is nothing wonderful in that. Those who have no belief in a future world may be expected to make the best they can of this world. It is their only chance.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

SHILLING WEEK.

A good many Freethinkers have remembered "Shilling Week." A good many more have not. Perhaps the general elections have had something to do with this. Anyhow, the door is still open for laggards and repentants. "Shilling Week" has generally run into "Shilling Month," and I suppose it will do so again. While thanking those who have subscribed, and whose letters I have read, often with much pleasure, I beg to remind all the rest that I am waiting to hear from them. Seventeen years ago I was waiting patiently for a door to open—in Holloway Jail. I hope I shall not have to wait as long for some Freethinkers on this occasion. Perhaps the thought of how I waited then will hasten some of them now. Not that I stand to gain anything personally, whether they are quick or slow; I am pressing them to give to the cause I love, and they give to me indirectly when they do that.

G. W. Foote.

Subscriptions received by Tuesday, October 9.

Four Hampsons, 4s.; S. W. Baynards, 1s.; T. Roberts, 2s.; H. M., 2s. 6d.; Collection at Mr. Foote's Evening Lecture at Manchester, £4 6s. 6d.; Mrs. G. Dickinson, 1s.; C. Heaton, 2s. 6d.; T. Heaton, 2s. 6d.; R. Davison, 5s.; J. Herrington, 1s.; W. Banks, 2s. 6d.; W. M. Constant, 4s.; F. E. Willis, 2s.; J. Unsworth, 2s.; E. Simpson, 1s.; J. Tomkins, 2s.; T. Rainbow, 1s.; E. Jones, 5s.; A Friend, 1s.; No Name, 1s.; J. R. Webley, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Henderson, 2s.; A Scotch Freethinker, 10s.; G. Hunter, 3s.; T. Dunbar, 1s.; R. Jacobs, 5s.; Freethinker, 2s.; Two Plymouth Chums, 2s.; O. Newell, 1s. 6d.; R. W., 2s.; G. Wilson, 5s.; W. Mitchell, 1s.; J. Little, 2s.; W. Davidson, 1s.; J. D. M., 2s. 6d.; J. McLelland, 3s.; C. Burgess, 5s.; C. L. Wright, 3s.; W. Wilson, 2s.; H. Thorp, 2s.; D. J. Williams, 1s.; W. Pugh, 3s.; J. Stanway, 2s. 6d.; J. Sanderson, 1s.; W. Sanderson, 1s.; B. Eglantine, 1s.; S. M. Peacock, 1s.; G. White, 1s.; P. Fitzpatrick, 1s.; E. Chapman, 1s.; J. Chapman, 1s.; J. T. Horsman, 1s.; J. Menzies, 1s.; J. Fothergill, 1s.; Eva Fothergill, 1s.; S. Fellows, 5s.; L. Simpson, 2s. 6d.; H. C. Long, 1s.; W. B. Thompson, 1s.; A. Walker, 2s. 6d.; T. H. Duke, 1s.; R. Brooks, 1s.; A. Hamilton, 2s.; G. Kirtley, 2s.; T. Armstrong, 1s.; W. A. Stewart, 2s. 6d.; E. Kirtley, 2s. 6d.; H. Organ, 1s.; G. Bintlan, 2s.; Walham Green, 1s.; W. H. Morrish, 5s.; L. Firth, 5s.; J. R. Evans, 2s.; W. Morris, 1s.; R. Ralston, 3s.; Blackburn Branch Members, 15s. 6d.; H. F. Sesemann, 10s.; S. W. Baynards, 1s.; D. Frankel, 2s.; J. Baker, 1s.; J. B. Skeoch, 10s. 6d.; J. Cheale, 1s.; J. Barclay, 3s.; J. G., 2s. 6d.; J. Ralston, 5s.; A. Ralston, 5s.; J. Stewart, 5s.; W. Muir, 5s.; J. Walker, 5s.; W. Patterson, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Patterson, 2s. 6d.; W. Bell, 2s.; W. Waddell, 2s.; J. Boyd, 2s.; R. S., 1s.; T. H., 1s.; J. W., 1s.; T. Hibbott, 1s.; Policeman, 2s.; W. H. S., 1s.; T. Whitely, 1s.; T. L. Hughes, 5s.; G. Brainbridge, 1s.; J. S. Jordan, 3s.; G. Cruddas, 1s.; T. M. M., 2s.; Joseph Bevins, 5s.; R. Robinson, 3s.; W. Cody, £1; M. Christopher, 10s.; H. J. Savory, 2s.; W. Robertson, 1s.; E. Jones, 2s. 6d.; S. Holman, 2s.; H. Porter, 1s.; W. Cromach, 5s.; W. Pike, 1s.; J. Kelsey, 1s.; J. O. Bates, 1s.; Someone Else, 1s.; A. Window, 2s.; A. E. Window, 2s.; J. Beale, 5s.; J. Oran, 2s. 6d.; G. Kersley, 2s.; F. Purland, 1s.; Speedwell, 6s.; R. Stirton, 2s.; E. G. H., 5s.; T. R. H., 5s.; Pauline Hull, £1; H. Good, 4s.; Andrew Millar, 2s. 6d.; Another Policeman, 2s. 6d.; C. Mascall, 2s. 6d.; James Thompson, 10s.; T. Thurlow, 4s.; A. Hull, 1s. 6d.; J. Young, 5s.; R. E. Mann, 5s.; Scotius, 2s.; Anarchist, 6s.; G. May, 2s.

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 14, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "South Africa and China: A Secularist's Outlook."

October 21, Birmingham; 28, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—October 14, Bolton; 21, Birmingham; 23, 24, 25, and 28 (Sunday), Glasgow and districts. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

S. L. J.—Mr. Foote hopes and intends to visit Plymouth this winter. We suppose the Co-operative Hall is still available. The articles on "God's Mother," with additions, will be published in pamphlet form very shortly. The editor is in first-rate health.

J. F. HAMPSON sends his promised £4 to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, and a further subscription to Shilling Week. "I hope," he says, "the party will provide a substantial sum with which to carry on the good work."

T. ROBERTS.—We wish all would translate their "admiration," as you do, into a Postal Order.

A. H. TABRUM.—(1) Any repudiation that Dr. Horton chooses to send us shall be inserted. We decline to insert anything second-hand and semi-oracular. (2) If you *have* read Darwin's *Life and Letters*, you were something less than honest yourself in trying to work off that old wheeze about Darwin's "belief in a Creator." We cannot find room for any more communications from you on this matter. We gave you space when you appeared to be straightforward.

H. M.—We do not quite understand your postscript.

G. DICKINSON (Mrs.).—We are specially pleased to hear from lady members of the party.

C. HEATON.—Glad to hear you will try to send the same amount again. We note your hope that Shilling Week will be "a grand success."

R. DAVISON sends cheque for his promised £2 to the Twentieth Century Fund, and a further contribution to Shilling Week.

J. HERRINGTON writes: "With regard to John Burns being a Freethinker, I heard him say, two years ago, that it was better to give children a good technical education than to force a lot of religious balderdash down their throats. It was on Clapham Common."

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

W. BARKS.—Duly credited. Thanks for your good wishes on behalf of the Twentieth Century Fund generally, and Shilling Week in particular.

F. E. WILLIS.—Shall be seen to. Of course we understand that you must support your own Branch. Thanks for cuttings.

E. SIMPSON.—Pleased to hear you "hope to do better next Shilling Week," and that you trust the new Fund will be a "great success." Your newsagent is misinformed. The new edition of the *Bible Handbook* is going off well, but it is not sold out. We wish it were. Renew your order, and insist on having the book. If you are disappointed again, order it direct by post from our publishing office. We note your opinion that the articles on Shakespeare were "splendid." The article on Marie Corelli's *Master-Christian* had to stand over for a little in consequence of the pressure of other work.

G. FREEMAN.—Glad to know you hope to send another subscription in a week or two.

W. MUMBY sends £5 in redemption of his promise towards the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. He says he is not satisfied with the party's response to this appeal, and that £1,000 ought to have been given or promised before this. It seems to him that too many Freethinkers want their Gospel of Reason "without money and without price," whereas they would be expected to "shell out" with some liberality if they were Christians. This correspondent wonders why the late Marquis of Queensberry didn't leave one of his many thousands to the cause of Freethought. What is wanted, in the circumstances, is a realisation by the rank and file of the party that our propaganda is crippled by want of funds. "Let them make up their minds to give freely now, in order to commence the new century with more hopeful prospects."

G. J. WARREN.—Thanks. See paragraph.

S. HOLMES.—We appreciate your good wishes.

E. A. CHARLTON.—Your letter is interesting, and your sentiments do you honor.

W. W. PEARCE sends 10s. for "ten rounds of ammunition against the Black Army."

HORACE DAWSON.—We have posted you a copy of the late Charles Bradlaugh's instructions to persons wishing to affirm. It is a pity that magistrates, and even their clerks, are so ignorant of the Oaths Act. When a witness, or other person, claiming to affirm, states that he has no religious belief, or that the taking of an oath is against his religious belief, the court is bound to administer the affirmation forthwith.

A. G. LYE.—Your suggestion shall be considered if the exigency arises.

C. L. W.—Sorry to hear of your trouble. Jesus was correct in saying he came to divide households; and his own household of faith is pretty well divided, too. We do not know of any small book such as you seek. You must try to open the poor victim's eyes yourself. But be patient.

A. WALKER.—We hope you will always maintain the same brave spirit.

H. B. DODDS.—It was intended to resume "Book Chat," but we have not yet been able to complete arrangements for relieving us from a lot of clerical work that should be done by other hands.

R. BROOKS.—No doubt the circulation of the *Freethinker* would increase if the price were reduced to a penny. But we don't think, as you do, that it would more than treble in a very short time. This journal is a speciality, and only appeals to an exceptional class of readers. The man in the street, with a penny to spend, prefers something a lot flabbier.

E. WOODWARD.—See paragraph.

W. WILSON.—Glad to hear from an old Freethinker who used to listen to Charles Southwell, and to know that you are so highly pleased with this journal.

H. THORP.—You point to a real difficulty. Perhaps we shall be able to overcome it in time.

DR. ROBERT T. NICHOLS (Ilford) sends cheque for his promised £2 2s. towards the Twentieth Century Fund.

W. PUGH.—Shall appear.

J. STANWAY.—Glad to hear you will "add a bit more before the year is out."

R. CHAPMAN.—See acknowledgment. Our compliments to the South Shields twelve.

J. W. O'LEARY.—The fact that the human race is no more immortal than any of its individual members is no reason for not promoting the work of progress. Just as a man may make the best of his sixty or seventy years, so the race may make the best of its myriads.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—G. Freeman, 10s.; S. Holmes, 10s.; E. A. Charlton, 10s.; W. W. Pearce, 10s.; H. B. Dodds, 10s.; George Brady, £2; Mrs. Daniel Baker, £1; James Carroll Jordan, 10s.

W. H. MORRISH, a veteran Freethinker, of Bristol, calls his subscription to Shilling Week "a slight appreciation of your unflagging efforts in the cause of progress."

L. FIRTH.—We fear the elections have caused a good many to forget Shilling Week. Perhaps they will recollect it yet. Better late than never.

H. ORGAN.—By all means bring your wife along when Mr. Foote is next lecturing in your neighborhood, and introduce her with yourself.

G. BRADY.—Very pleased to hear from you again. We note your hope that the Twentieth Century Fund will "total to four figures—preferably all nines."

J. E. HARLEY.—See acknowledgment. You sent names, but did not put amounts against them.

JAMES NEATE.—Glad to hear your brother-in-law will subscribe £1.

D. FRANKEL.—Under the new scheme it is intended to have Sunday evening lectures in East London.

R. JOHNSON sends his promised £2 2s. to the Twentieth Century Fund. He wishes he could have sent more, and is perfectly satisfied that the Fund will be well administered.

J. BAKER.—There is room for a good monthly, like the old *Progress* you so much enjoyed; but it would need another editor. Mr. Foote is overworked already.

J. RALSTON, sending a good list of subscriptions from Motherwell, says: "You have done yeoman's service to the cause, and I earnestly hope there will be a hearty response to your present appeal."

T. P. STEWART sends his promised guinea to the Twentieth Century Fund, with some subscriptions to Shilling Week from friends. He asks when Mr. Foote is coming North again. Perhaps before Christmas.

F. P. STERRY, 2 Briar-road, Twickenham, has mislaid the letter of the Freethinker who wrote to him about forming a local N.S.S. Branch. Will the correspondent forward Mr. Sterry his address again?

JAMES THOMSON.—Yes, if "thousands" sent as much as you do, all would be well.

POLICEMAN.—Very pleased to receive your interesting letter, and hope to deserve all the good things you say of us.

T. L. HUGHES.—Thanks for the suggestion.

G. CRUDDAS says: "Your scheme *re* continuity of effort is splendid." We hope it will prove so.

W. CROMACH.—Illegalities in the Church are of more concern to Churchmen than to us. Thanks all the same.

G. KERSLEY.—Quite amusing. Kiss the little maiden for us.

ANDREW MILLAR.—There was no wincing, anyhow.

J. B.—Acknowledged as "Another Policeman." There was one in front of you. Yes, the question of Headquarters in London will have to come; but we have patience, and bide our time.

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Received.—Glasgow Herald—Truthseeker (New York)—Boston Investigator—Public Opinion (New York)—La Raison—The Crescent—Marylebone Advertiser—Leeds Mercury—Ethical World—Secular Thought—Literary Guide—Bacup Times—Reynolds' Newspaper—The Liberator—Torch of Reason—Two Worlds—Freidenker.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

Lecture Notices must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Scale of Advertisements:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

What with the fine weather and the lassitude following the parliamentary elections, it was not surprising that Mr. Foote had a smallish morning audience at Manchester on Sunday. Happily there was a marked improvement in the afternoon, and the Secular Hall was crowded in the evening; all the standing room being occupied at the back, and a good many people having to be turned away from the doors. Everybody was in a good humor, and the lecturer was in his best form. Mr. Pegg, the chairman, made a reference to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, and some words on the subject were added by Mr. Foote. Unfortunately it was not possible to get through the meeting with collection boxes; but the respectable sum of £4 6s. 6d. was collected as the audience passed out.

Mr. Foote lectures this evening (October 14) at the Athenæum, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W. His subject will be "South Africa and China: A Secularist's Outlook." Freethinkers should give publicity to this lecture among their more orthodox friends, and the hall should be crowded. Discussion will be allowed as usual.

Mr. Charles Watts had another good gathering last Sunday evening at the Athenæum Hall. His criticism of the pretensions of Spiritualism met with a hearty approval from the audience, many of whom were strangers, including a good sprinkling of ladies. Mr. C. H. Cattell presided, and, in a neat little speech, urged the claims of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

During the past week Mr. Watts has been debating in Bolton upon Spiritualism. We hope to give next week a brief account of the two nights' encounter. This evening (Sunday, October 14) Mr. Watts lectures in Bolton, when no doubt the Lancashire friends will muster in good numbers.

Arrangements are completed for the Freethought Demonstration in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on Sunday, October 21. The Demonstration itself will take place in the evening. Mr. Foote will take the chair at 7 o'clock, and will be supported by Messrs. C. Watts, C. Cohen, and H. P. Ward. Speeches will be delivered by all four. Local "saints" who desire to have particulars as to the tea and the reserved seat tickets will please apply to the secretary, Mr. J. Partridge, 65 Cato-street, Birmingham.

As the use of the Birmingham Town Hall is granted by the Corporation for the whole day, it has been decided to hold an afternoon meeting as well as the evening Demonstration. Mr. Watts will occupy the chair on this occasion, and Mr. Foote will, by special request, lecture on "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ." Of course the admission is to be free, but there will be a collection towards the expenses.

Mr. C. Cohen delivers three lectures to-day (Oct. 14) at Pontypridd, particulars of which will be found under the head of "Lecture Notices." We hope the South Wales friends will give him bumping audiences.

We have received a copy of the Manifesto of the "Secular Education" party at Birmingham. It is an admirable and a statesman-like document, which should produce a strong impression on the more intelligent and thoughtful electors. We hope the candidate, Mr. H. Percy Ward, will find a sufficient number of supporters to give him fifteen votes each, and put him somewhere near the top of the poll. Anyhow, he ought to secure a seat. Mr. Ward is, of course, in favor of Trade Union hours and wages for the Board's employees. He would also maintain the equal right of all parties to the use of the Schools for public meetings.

Mr. G. L. Mackenzie and "Mimnermus" will perhaps be pleased to learn that productions of theirs are reproduced in the *Liberator* (Melbourne) from our columns—namely, "Dishonest Critics" and "The Betrayal of Burton."

The last number of *Secular Thought* (Toronto) to hand contains the third and last of Mr. Foote's articles on Shakespeare, reproduced from the *Freethinker*.

Public Opinion (New York) is a high-class weekly. The last number to hand, under the heading of "Religious," contains a brief article by Dr. Joseph Parker (with a portrait) on "How are the Masses to be Attracted?" "I question," he says, "whether they are to be attracted by mere shows, tricks, and shallow novelties." Can it be that he speaks from experience? Dr. Parker's article is followed by a brief article from the *Freethinker*, or rather some "Acid Drops" in the form of an article, on the same subject. We congratulate our American contemporary on its open-mindedness and impartiality.

The Camberwell Branch has closed its outdoor lecture stations for the season, with the exception of Station-road, which will be continued as long as weather permits. Mr. Cohen has kindly promised to conduct a series of Science Classes on Sunday mornings throughout the winter months. These gatherings—of which further particulars will be announced—will, no doubt, be well attended, especially as there are no restrictions, all comers being cordially welcome. To-night, at the Hall, Mr. B. Hyatt will give his able elocutionary recital.

Mr. A. B. Moss had a very large audience on Sunday last at Victoria Park, when he wound up his outdoor season by a lecture on "Religion and Rationalism." He had two opponents, both of whom he answered to the entire satisfaction of the audience.

The Passing of the Creeds.

Dogma Disappearing before the Advancing Scientific Spirit.

A creed is an authoritative statement of something that nobody knows anything about. Creeds are holy hypotheses, sanctimonious guesses, pious presumptions that threaten and damn. Their field is the unknown; they journey into the eternities past, or into endless ages still to come, and relate how the Infinite felt, what he thought, planned, purposed, and designed, and how he will feel, think, accomplish, and consummate.

Creeds lay down the lines for the orthodox believer and for the orthodox God. They leave to man no freedom of thought, and to God no freedom of action. They put both God and man under probation. If man does not believe as they say he shall, they consign him to hell; if God shall not act as the creeds have dictated, we do not know what they will do with him. Perhaps, when the time arrives, an ecumenical council will be called to settle that.

creeds and creed-making.

Creeds are based upon authority; they do not pretend to be founded upon evidence, proof, knowledge, discovery, reason, science, or sense—they are above such trivialities, they represent authority. The more they offend reason, transcend knowledge, and confound common sense, the greater is their authority; the more unbelievable they are, the greater is the merit of believing them. If it is possible to win salvation by intellectual penance, mental mortification, the distrust of knowledge, the crucifixion of reason, and at all times resisting common sense like the Devil, then to believe any one of the creeds ought to assure one of the halo, harp, and crown.

Creed-making culminated about 250 years ago. Not far from the middle of the seventeenth century the three most conspicuous creeds were adopted. Up till that time the Greek Church had been using a creed that the Churches themselves had chosen—a creed prepared by a bishop; but it was about the year 1650 that the

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Greek Church formally recognised and authorised this creed. Not far from the same time the Reformed Church of Germany authorised its creed. They used as a basis the creed of Luther, that of Calvin, and the Heidelberg Confession. It was about the same time that the English Parliament appointed an assembly consisting theoretically of more than one hundred and fifty clergymen and laymen, but which had, as a matter of fact, an average attendance of about seventy-five. This assembly was appointed to take up matters concerning the Church, its doctrine, practice, and faith. Having been duly convened, this assembly continued its session for the space of six and one-half years, finishing in February, 1649. The result of that assembly was the "Westminster Confession of Faith," which has remained until this day the great symbol of Calvinistic dogmas.

DOGMAS ADAPTED TO MONARCHIES.

In order to understand the evolution of the creeds, we must have in mind the prevalent spirit of the ages that produced them. It would be altogether out of line to say that any great symbol, any great doctrine, any historic formula, came into being without any reference to the mental habits and conditions of the age that produced it. The dogmatic creeds were a natural and, we may say, an inevitable outgrowth of the mental attitude of that century. The prevalent idea of organisation, of government, was that which involved a great central power having authority. The only widely-known idea of government among men was that of the monarchy. The only conception those people were able to make of an infinite being was that of a king. They knew many men; the highest was the king, and they called God the king. Our dogmas and fundamental principles, upon which the modern Church is founded, all imply that conception of the monarchical God. That being true, he could only be efficient in the world as he had representatives, accredited ambassadors armed with delegated power. That power could not inhere in the individual alone; it must be a blend between the individual and the truth which he had to proclaim. The king idea of God required an accredited man and an accredited dogma. It required the priest and the theology; it required the Church with authority, and a confession of faith with equal authority.

The rise of those two classes, those that should rule and those who should be ruled, made the rise and supremacy of the creeds possible. We have seen in the stories about the Nazarene those two tendencies. The disciples, unable to stand alone, wished to bow down to some authority, and they said to him, "Be thou our master." They called him again and again "Lord," but he declined the term. He said: "Call no man Lord." We are beginning to accept this statement. The mental immaturity that makes multitudes of people feel the necessity of being ruled brings upon them an infatuation in turn to rule over somebody else. It is like a series of small forms of life. Plain, common, ordinary "fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em, the little ones have smaller ones, and so *ad infinitum*." When the disciples appealed to Jesus to be their Lord, consciously or unconsciously they were laying the lines to make themselves lords over someone else.

EVOLUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

Since the creeds were formulated 250 years ago there has been a marked and most radical change in the spirit of man, and in the intellectual condition of the world. People in those times could bow down to authority; now they are asking authority to give a reason why it should be bowed down to. The scientific spirit has, in a measure, supplanted the dogmatic spirit; and, instead of that mental attitude that made men subservient, and caused them to wish to be ruled, there has emerged a democratic spirit that persuades every man that he himself, in his own right, is the lawful ruler of himself. The scientific spirit, together with the spirit of criticism, which has always been a reverend and truth-seeking spirit, has made possible the evolution of the individual. This is in exact harmony with the usual method, and what appears to be the obvious end of nature—namely, the completion of the individual; the raising him out of the mass; the drawing around each one the lines that mark the sacred enclosure across which none may dare to pass, to subjugate or to enslave. The effect of this spirit upon the creeds is most fatal.

There are no new creeds. There has been no distinct doctrinal symbol issued since that of 250 years ago. This is not because new Churches have not been formed; it is not because men are any less moral or any less earnest about spiritual things. It is because of the steady advance of mankind. Men have outgrown the creed-making spirit. Since that time Churches have been formed, and each new Church unconsciously confessed the fact that the creed spirit was a thing of the past. The Baptist denomination have gone this far: they claim that they have no creed, while they have one; that is to say, they feel the impulse of the modern spirit, and would yield to it, but do not quite know how; so they have a confession of faith with definite articles, elaborate and inclusive. While they say they have no authority to compel conformity to their confession of faith, they do practically accept it as a creed, and refuse to have any denominational fellowship with anyone called Baptist who departs from the symbol. This is the way they get around it, and it is a beautiful peace of expediency. If a Baptist Church departs from the traditional method of faith of the Baptist denomination, the great denomination says: "We have no right to say what that Church shall believe. We cannot, believing in the freedom of interpretation, exclude that Church from our denomination"; so they withdraw the denomination from that Church. It is just exactly as if a man had a tree with a limb which was out of line, or out of harmony with the rest of it, and he should say to himself: "Now, I won't cut that limb off from that tree, because I have no jurisdiction over the limb; but the tree is mine, and I can do with it as I choose, so I will cut the tree off from the limb."

A CHURCH WITHOUT A CREED.

Then there is yet a newer Church that says it has no creed, and it comes as near telling the truth as we have any reason to expect, and that is the Christian (or Campbellite) Church. They affirm positively that they have no creed. That Church is not as old by two hundred years as the Westminster Confession of Faith. The reason they have no creed is because they are responding that far to the spirit of the age; they belong to the present century, while they accept the Bible as the great body of faith and as a guide to practice, and do insist upon one test sentence—"To believe on Christ and be baptised"; yet they go no further. It is encouraging to reflect that there is at least one in the great family of Christian organisations that so far responds to the modern spirit of enlightenment and progress as to leave to each man and woman the dignity and responsibility of doing his or her own thinking.

Then there is yet another one of the Church family that presents the strangest and the most inexplicable condition that may be found in all the variegated history of the Christian Church, and that is the body that has a creed which its influential members must sign, but from which the lay members are exempt. This is carrying the doctrine of vicariousness to the last possible extreme. They have in this great Church vicarious orthodoxy. The preachers, the elders, and the men holding official positions in the Church must swear that they believe all those things in the creed, and will defend them; but the man or woman that joins the Church is given a diluted, modified, somewhat modernised form of statement which they are required to sign. I do not know how credal infatuation can go beyond that.

HOPELESS VICTIMS OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY.

Still another influence affecting the creeds is the general unrest among those supposed to be subscribers to the creeds. Of course, the Westminster Confession of Faith does not send infants to perdition; and a distinguished New York preacher, who is himself a Presbyterian, and who ought to know but does not, is mistaken about that, and no man or woman could possibly conclude that the Infinite did damn babies; but there is a feeling in the minds of many that God Almighty is worthy of having a creed about him that will not give anyone even a chance to suspect that he damns infants. I doubt very much if a single one

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of the old standards of faith will be altered, changed, amended, or improved. I believe in the possibility of reformation and progress for everything in this world except the old Church creeds, and I think they are hopelessly the victims of total depravity.

At a recent missionary meeting in New York City one of the clergymen roused the meeting to the highest pitch of enthusiasm and excitement by the declaration that the Churches ought to make a universal bonfire of their creeds, and get together on the simple platform of love to God and service to man. He said in that connection that he was willing to sign blindfolded every one of the creeds, provided only that he might sign them all. That, I suppose, was on the supposition that if a man takes two poisons, or three, they will counteract each other, and there will be no bad results from any of them. J. E. Roberts.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be concluded.)

Echoes from Olympus.

I.—Concerning Celestial Clubs.

The Junior Angelic is generally admitted to be one of the cosiest of celestial clubs. It has been established only about thirteen centuries, so that it has all the pristine vigor of youth, and its original charm of novelty has not yet worn off. As an offshoot of the old Angelic, founded somewhere about the Flood, it affords a home for sprightly young saints who feel it a relief at times to retire from the society of their elders. The members make it a little joke that, if they cannot lop anything from the eternal future, they can take the rise out of the old fogies at the other end. So they constitute themselves the "young party" in Olympus, and, according to the Angel Gabriel, often behave as such.

The old Angelic goes on as of yore—ever so many thousand years of yore—and sometimes looks askance at its offspring. But it is usually with a benevolent regard. After all, "boys will be boys," as Methusaleh observed *apropos* of some pranks of a giddy apostle who had been trying to paint heaven red. The old Angelic was established simply as a little symposium for a few Ancients of Days who had made their way to heaven, and found time hanging rather heavily on their hands. Adam was the first president. But he wasn't very successful in his office. He lacked "grit." There was a suspicion that he was hen-pecked. Eve was always calling to fetch him home. He grew disconsolate and unsociable, and ran up a score.

After two or three thousand years, he was voted primitive. He couldn't talk for nuts about anything but gardening. When, in his cups, he would occasionally vary the theme by railing about the Serpent. Joseph of Egypt called him an old cuckold. Venerable members shook their heads, and said there might be something in it. Joseph ought to know; it was in his line. Joseph, by the way, was often the butt of a great deal of sly wit and humor. He always declared, though none believed him, that, in the little adventure with which we are familiar, he emerged from temptation scatheless. David, remembering Bathsheba, always listened in cold, cynical silence, while Solomon sagely winked the other eye.

Anyhow, after three thousand years—or was it three thousand five hundred?—prominent members said, in a determined sort of way, that, as regarded the management of the club, they *must* have arrangements more up to date. Adam, who so far had practically bossed the show, admitted that it was a reasonable desire. As to any shortcomings of his own, he pleaded that this was the first club established in heaven, and he hadn't known of anything of the sort on earth, having been made a little too previous. Necessarily he was without experience. At the end of the very next hundred years Adam sent in his resignation. The committee regretted that he had taken this hasty step, and appointed Jacob in his place.

"Poor old Adam," said one of the members some time afterwards. "Wonder what's gone with him?" Gabriel was able to afford some information. Adam, he said, was doing a bit of gardening—odd jobs here and there. Eve was taking in washing—the white robes of the lady-angels—2s. the dozen. They lived a cat-and-dog life by all accounts. Adam would often tell her to go to hell to her "fancy man." Eve would retort that the "fancy man" was far better than a poor fool whom she only took on because there were no others to choose from.

When, at length, it was fully decided to reconstitute the Angelic, it was thought that it would be well to give forth that the club was established to "promote science, literature, and art."

"Let us keep that well to the front," said Noah, "and we can have as many jollifications as we please amongst ourselves."

"Listen to the old reptile," said Moses, "I thought I had sufficiently exposed him in Genesis."

Noah withdrew from the discussion in a huff, and privately gave members to understand that there was much still to be learnt about Moses' treatment of his poor wife, Zipporah.

Eventually the object of the club was agreed upon—namely, "the promotion of science, literature, and art." Jacob inquired if a quiet little game at baccarat or faro would come within the scope, and was satisfied when assured that it came under the head of art.

Then it was asked did their *personnel* justify the pretensions they were making. Moses said he would take upon himself to represent science, and, if need be, literature as well. This gave rise to some discord. It was agreed that Moses should represent science, but there were other claims in regard to literature. King David wanted to know where he came in with his Psalms. Aaron declared that Moses never wrote a line in his life. Whereupon Moses retorted that David never composed half the Psalms that were popularly credited to him.

Solomon, feeling the judicial spirit strong upon him, gave orders that literature should be brought before him and cut in twain. The mild Isaiah explained to him that literature was not a baby. And Samuel led the bewildered monarch away, explaining to the company that the old fool was gone dotty over the one success of his life. Left by himself in a corner, Solomon had a fit of the Ecclesiastes blues. All, he said, was vanity and vexation of spirit, and Moses, so far from being the meekest of men, was the most conceited old ass he had ever struck.

Eventually Moses was accepted as the representative of science; David stood for literature; and Noah, as the architect of the ark, represented art. Having thus justified themselves in regard to objects, and their possible achievement, the old Angelic took in members and elected committees. Noah was made chairman of the Wine Committee in consideration of his recorded experience of the juice of the grape. David, chairman of the Entertainment Committee, having regard to his harp solos before Saul and his dancing *in nubibus* before the Lord. The other offices were filled, and the club was re-established for a few more thousand years. None but approved patriarchs and saints were admitted. For though it was, and is, easy enough to get into heaven, it never was easy to get into the select and exclusive Angelic. Ezekiel was black-balled for his objectionable language, and several minor prophets had a narrow squeak. Jonah was accounted small fry in spite of his big fish, but was admitted to membership at the entreaty of Moses, who said he had often wished to meet someone who was a bigger "crammer" than himself.

So much for the old Angelic. The Junior Angelic was mainly established by the exertions of Peter. He it was who secured for it its present palatial home in the golden street which answers to our stately Pall Mall. Once the idea was mooted, he threw himself into the enterprise with all the fiery enthusiasm of his nature. It was whispered that he was moved to this piece of rivalry by personal spite and chagrin. Certain it is that, on one occasion, he flung out of the old Club in a towering rage because some member had imitated, in his hearing, the crowing of a cock. His own account was that he was sick of hearing the infernal lies of old Moses and the croakings of that old raven, Jeremiah.

Anyhow, he went round and canvassed for members, mostly among the representatives of the New Dispensation. Matthew and John, as old personal friends, readily promised support. Paul was won over when it was hinted that possibly he might be made President. Another John—he of Patmos—voluntarily interested himself in the project to quite a surprising extent. But, on a private intimation that that personage was not exactly *compos mentis*, Peter decided to shunt him as quickly and as politely as possible. This was more easily decided upon than done. A fierce squabble ensued, and ended in Peter flooring the author of "Revelation." He would have cut off his ear with a flaming sword, but the waiter who was sent out for the weapon failed to return in time.

The club eventually was fairly established, and drew some of the members from the parent institution. It went on very well at first, as most clubs do. In the course of a few centuries, however, causes of dissatisfaction arose. Curiously enough, the loudest complaints came from Peter, who, in this matter as in others, exhibited his fickle and unstable character.

The other day he stalked into the reading-room and glared around. Obviously he was in a cantankerous mood. Members knew from experience that it was best at such times to leave him alone. Matthew, who had been dozing over the *Celestial Intelligencer*, looked up, and shuffled uneasily in his chair. Mark hid himself behind the *New Jerusalem Rock*. James alone had the temerity to speak.

"Well, Peter," he said, with an attempt at cheeriness, "how goes it?"

"What the blazes has that to do with you?" returned Peter angrily. "Go and look after your poor Peculiars, and leave me alone."

"Well, you might be civil," returned James, wincing a little at the allusion.

"How can anyone be civil after the day I've had at the gate? I should think half the population of that miserable

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little planet, the Earth, have been clamoring there to-day. But I soon sent the best part of them packing. Worse luck, I've gone and kicked my toe out of joint."

"Never mind, Peter; sit down and make yourself comfortable," said James, in a conciliatory tone.

But no; Peter must go fuming and foraging round the room.

"Where the devil is that *Celestial Intelligencer?* I never saw such a club. You never can find a paper when you want one. I believe the members must carry them off in their pockets—the mean cusses—and perhaps sell them in the streets on the way home. Of course, they'd swear they didn't. They'd deny anything ——"

"Even their own Master," said Mark, very much under his breath.

"What's that?" exclaimed Peter, who did not quite catch the observation.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," said Mark, soothingly.

Matthew now handed over the sought-for paper, and Peter, only partially mollified, threw himself into a chair. "A fine club this," he growled, "with only one copy of the chief paper. And where's the tape? What's the good of a club, even in heaven, without the tape? How can you tell what's won, or how the betting's going? Hanged if I don't go back to the old originals. There'd be a bit of fun to be got there from chaffing Moses about Darwin. Here, waiter, bring me a cigar—bring the archangels' box—no twopenny-ha'penny weeds for me, mind you. And be quick about it, or there'll be murder in this club, if murder is possible. Hang it all, let's have a look at the news."

Francis Neale.

(To be concluded.)

The Paris International Congress.

(Concluded from page 637.)

The reporter on the second question (that of "the bases of morality") was Madame Gillain, a Belgian delegate, and Professor of Law at Brussels. This lady is a clear, bright speaker, and, as we found at a later stage, made an excellent president. The Belgian Freethinkers are, indeed, fortunate in possessing an advocate so learned and persuasive.

On the recommendation of the Report presented by Madame Gillain, the Congress declared that education should be entirely evacuated of all religious notions, and that the bases of morality are outside the limits of all systems of supernaturalism. Social morality can only be established on purely secular lines, built on the certitudes of science. Morality must be made independent of all theological conceptions, for too long have the principles of ethics been diluted with the poison of religious precept and sanction. The social ideal stands superior to the religious ideal, for, whilst both aim towards human perfection, the one pursues this end actuated with the sordid hope of divine reward, the other rests satisfied with the natural reward which the accomplishment of social duty brings to us on the plane of this present life.

The third question, that of "complete education," etc., was considered and reported upon in sections. The section relating to education itself was committed for report to M. Courtois, Receveur Municipal of Le Mans, an important town in France. Here, again, was a notable man, and a speaker of remarkable precision and power. It was a rich treat to listen to his lucid French, spoken with classical elegance. M. Courtois is one of the stalwarts of the movement, and delivers lectures on Freethought not only at Le Mans, but in the townships and villages around. On the recommendation of his Report, the Congress voted in favor of continuing the education of all children until they shall have attained their eighteenth year, in order that the rising generation might be able to reach the complete development of their physical, moral, and intellectual powers; the State to accept the obligation, if needs be, to make proper provision not only for the education, but also for the material wants, of the children. The declaration was made that, whatever may be the social position of their parents, the children have the right to the instruction indispensable to the due formation of their intelligence as well as to the moral education which shall train their hearts aright. In the light of these principles, the Congress resolved that, in its opinion, all the three degrees of knowledge—the primary, secondary, and superior—should be accessible to the children of the poor as well, as now, to those of the rich.

On the question of the co-education of the sexes, the Congress adopted the Report of Ida Altmann in favor of the principle of equality of treatment.

The right to teach gave rise to a very important discussion. The Commission recommended that education should become a purely public service, withdrawn entirely from the hands of clerical obscurantists. A large section, however, objected to the proposal to disenable the priests to teach the children of the "faithful," and, the vote having been demanded by nationality, the principle of all-round liberty was carried. I felt it my duty to protest and vote against a principle which I conceived to be a departure from good sense and fair play.

On the fourth question ("woman's rights") divorce by mutual consent, subject to all existing obligations, moral and legal, as regards the maintenance and care of the offspring, was voted by the Congress.

The fifth question, that relating to Socialism and Freethought, gave rise to a long and animated discussion. A number of delegates maintained the identity of Socialism and Freethought, but the resolution actually passed was rather too vague to commit either side to anything specific. After affirming the inseparability of Freethought and Socialism, the resolution adds that Freethought is to be understood as "the complete emancipation of humanity, from the political, economic, and moral point of view." This, certainly, Freethought is *in posse;* but, as I pointed out to the Congress, it was quite possible to-day to be a Freethinker and yet repudiate the systems and schemes of the various Socialist schools. That this "inseparability" was of a non-committal character was shown by the fact that, after having voted the necessity of propagating Freethought amongst the Socialist and Co-operative groups, the Congress refused to accord to the Socialists the right of spreading their propaganda amongst the Freethought Societies. It was felt that, being Freethinkers already, the Socialists (at any rate, the continental section) were bound, as the resolution put it, "to vigorously combat the various Churches, and particularly those amongst them whose organisation and general action are the principal obstacles to the development of human progress, and to the establishment of a society based on Socialist principles." Again, it was by the vote according to nationality that the point was gained, and, I may add, that I spoke and voted against requiring what would practically be a Socialist confession of faith from that large section of Freethinkers whose social creed excludes Socialism.

And now considerations of space will only allow me a few additional notes: (1) The Congress decided to transfer to Brussels the central offices of the International Federation of Freethought. My colleague, Mr. Roger, and myself were appointed corresponding members for England. (2) It was voted by acclamation that a weekly journal, specially devoted to the propagation of Rationalism, and serving to unify and record the efforts of Freethought throughout the world, should be started as from January 1, 1901. It will be called *La Raison*, and will be under the direction of M. Leon Fournémont, for Belgium, and M. Victor Charbonnel, for France. A thousand shares of ten francs each will float the journal, and of these 452 were subscribed amongst the delegates before the Congress concluded its labors. I sincerely hope that some help may be given in this country to so important an enterprise. (3) The next International Congress was fixed for 1902 at Geneva.

The inevitable banquet took place! But what a banquet!—a menu for gourmets, washed by a rich flow of generous wine—wine in the plural, and in ample streams of all the four kinds! But the speeches capped all. M. Leon Fournémont, in the chair, excelled himself; Antide Boyer, the Marseilles Deputy, was divine; but Sebastien Faure sent us all into ecstasies of thrilled delight. Never shall I forget the man, the speech, or the occasion. Five English Secularists attended the banquet—viz., Mr. and Mrs. Roger, Mr. and Mrs. Wood (all of the Camberwell Branch), and myself. Mr. Roger's speech was well received.

Throughout the Congress the speeches and deliberations were in French. Babel was thereby abolished. But the Congress was something more than French, or English, or German, or anything else insular and parochial. It was intensely human. Nationality was merged in the larger feeling of humanity, and Freethought at least showed its wide catholicity in uniting men, whom priests had formerly made enemies, in the bonds of a love wider than the bounds of country and deeper than the shallows of a frothy patriotism. Freethought is not English or French; it is International; and it is International because the memories of a Bruno, a Dolet, a Paine, and an Ingersoll consecrate no stupid prides of racial animosity, but inspire us with a hope that the Black Army, against which these worthies warred, may finally be rooted out from the affections of the foolish by the united efforts all over the world of the men and women who are too busy with the problems here to waste time upon the chimera of the hereafter.

William Heaford.

Errata in last article:—For *Fourémont* read *Fournémont;* for *Fuepius* read *Fulpius;* for *Nasniv* read *Namur;* for *Nance* read *France* (Masonic lodges of France).

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "South Africa and China: A Secularist's Outlook."

South London Ethical Society Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road: 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "The New English-American Friendship."

Camberwell (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, An Evening with Mr. B. Hyatt.

West London Branch ("Victory," Newnham-street, Queen's-street, Edgware-road): October 16, at 9, Business meeting.

Open-air Propaganda.

Station-road (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.

Battersea Park Gates: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 3.15, E. Leggatt, "Bible Teaching in our Board Schools."

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

Hammersmith (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, F. A. Davies.

West Ham Branch (Stratford Grove): 7.30, F. A. Davies.

Kingsland (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, E. Pack.

COUNTRY.

Belfast Ethical Society (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): J. H. Gilliland, "Mr. Gladstone's *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture.*"

Birmingham Branch: W. F. Barnard—11 (Bull Ring), "Some Bible Flaws"; 7 (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms), "No Religion in Board Schools." October 17, at 8 (Bull Ring), H. Percy Ward, "Education: Religious and Secular."

Bolton (Spinners' Hall, St. George's-road): 6.30, Charles Watts, "Secularism: Its Necessity and Superiority."

Chatham Secular Society (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, W. Heaford, "War, Religion, and Human Nature."

Glasgow (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—J. F. Turnbull, "Why I am a Secularist"; 6.30, Social Meeting.

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Vocal and Instrumental Concert.

Liverpool (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Dr. Nicholson, "Justice to the Past."

Manchester Secular Hall (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 3, Annual meeting of members; 6.30, G. Mason, "The Social Economy of Emile Zola."

Porth Branch (The Empire, Pontypridd): C. Cohen—11, "The Folly of Faith"; 2.30, "Christianity and Women"; 7.30, "Foreign Missions: What They Do, and How They Do It."

South Shields (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "Christianity and Slavery."

Sunderland (Miners' Hall, Roker-avenue): H. Percy Ward—11, "Hell, and How to Get There"; 3, "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secular Platform"; 7, "Charles Bradlaugh, Atheist."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—October 14, Pontypridd. 21, Birmingham. 28, Athenæum Hall. November 4, Glasgow. 11, Aberdeen.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—October 14, Sunderland; 21, Birmingham; 28, Birmingham. November 4, Manchester. 18, Birmingham. 25, Sheffield. 26 and 27, Debate at Sheffield. December 9, Glasgow.

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THE

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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Agnostic Nonsense.

SOME years ago I said that an Agnostic was an Atheist with a tall hat on. Many a true word is spoken in jest, and I believe this is a case in point. It may be my obtuseness, but I have never been able to discover any real difference between the Atheist and the Agnostic, except that the latter is more in love with respectability; or, if not exactly in love, is anxious to contract a marriage of convenience. In the old Hall of Science days, I noticed that sturdy Freethinkers used to come and sit under Bradlaugh, and proudly call themselves Atheists. That was while they were comparatively poor, and free from domestic embarrassments. When they became better off, and their children (especially their daughters) grew taller, they gradually edged off to South-place Chapel, sat under Mr. Conway, and called themselves Agnostics. They did not pretend that their opinions had changed, and they were glad to sneak into the old place (minus wife and family) on a stirring occasion; but they had drifted, and they knew why, though they never liked to say so. Bradlaugh's strength lay amongst those who could, for one reason or another, afford to defy conventions; such as the skilled artisans and the lower-middle classes, with a dash of professional society. Two hundred a year was fatal to his front-seat people. When they reached that income they emigrated (with their womenkind) to a more "respectable" establishment.

I do not shrink from the consequences of the foregoing observations. Indeed, I will speak with the utmost plainness. Charles Bradlaugh was an Atheist because he was a man of invincible courage, and did not care twopence for the frowns of the Church or the sneers of society. Professor Huxley was an Agnostic because he had over a thousand a year, and moved in the "upper circles," and filled certain "honorable" positions. He was too honest to say that he believed what he disbelieved, but he could not afford to bear an odious name. So he coined the word "Agnostic," which was newer, longer, and less intelligible than "Atheist." And having got a label that suited him entirely, he devised many subtle reasons why other Freethinkers should wear it too. A number of them jumped at the opportunity. They were delighted to be at once heterodox and respectable. It was a new and unexpected sensation. They were able to criticise orthodoxy with great freedom, providing they did not touch upon the two vital points of all supernatural faith—namely, the belief in God and the doctrine of a future life; and they were also able to chide the Atheist for his vulgar dogmatism in calling certain religious ideas false, when the true philosopher knew that it was impossible to demonstrate the negative of anything.

I used to think that Mr. Holyoake was an Atheist. At any rate, he wrote a *Trial of Theism*, in which he made that ancient faith look a frightful old impostor. But I conclude that he now wishes this work to be regarded as an academic exercise, a playful effort of the theoretical intelligence. Many years ago—and still for all I know—he offered the British public the story of his prosecution and imprisonment for "blasphemy" under the title of *The Last Trial for Atheism*. He was really not tried for Atheism at all, and most of us took the word as a defiant expression of his principles. But we were mistaken. Mr. Holyoake explains in the new *Agnostic Annual* that he is not an Atheist now, whatever he may have been when he was young, ignorant, and impulsive. He says that the Atheist is guilty of "preposterous presumption"—which I think I understood, although it is a very loose expression. He calls Atheism a "wild assumption." He professes himself an Agnostic; which, as he explains it, is our old friend Sceptic *redivivus* from the pages of David Hume.

> "Theism, Atheism, and Agnosticism denote attitudes of thought in relation to the existence of a Supreme Cause of Nature. The Theist declares, without misgiving, that there is such an existence. The Atheist, without misgiving, declares there is no such existence. The Agnostic, more modest in pretension, simply says that, having no information on the subject, he does not know."

Mr. Holyoake says, further on, that the Theist and the Atheist alike have "no doubt that they knew the solution" of the "mighty problem of the cause of eternity." Well, I beg to tell him that I am acquainted with at least one Atheist who does not affect to know this "solution." This particular Atheist does not so much as know the meaning of "the cause of eternity." To him it is—as Hamlet says—words, words, words! But this is not enough. I will go further, and ask Mr. Holyoake to refer me to one Atheist who *denies* the existence of God. Of course there are many Atheists who deny the existence of this or that God, because the definition of such alleged beings involves a contradiction to obvious facts of universal experience. But what Atheist denies the existence of *any* God; that is to say, of any superhuman or supernatural power? All the Atheists I know of take the position that there is no evidence on which to form a valid judgment, and that man's finite intellect seems incapable of solving an infinite problem. And as I understand Mr. Holyoake this is the very position taken by the Agnostic.

Etymologically, as well as philosophically, an Atheist is one without God. That is all the "A" before "Theist" really means. It is not disbelief, but unbelief. Now I believe the Agnostic is without God too. Practically, at any rate, he is in the same boat with the Atheist.

Atheism may be called a negative attitude. No doubt it is so. But every negative involves something positive. If the Atheist turns away from the "mighty problem" as hopeless, he is likely to tackle more promising problems with greater vigor and effect. But it is admitted by Mr. Holyoake that Agnosticism is a negative attitude too. Wherein, then, lies the justification for all the superfine airs of its advocates?

When you look into the matter closely, you perceive that Atheism and Agnosticism are both definite in the same direction. Bradlaugh and Huxley were at one in their hostile criticism of Christianity. Keeping the mind free from superstition is an excellent work. It is weeding the ground. But it is not sowing, and still less reaping. It merely creates the possibility of sound and useful growth. We have to fall back upon Secularism at the finish. Nor is that a finality. Secularism is the affirmation of the claims of this life against the usurpations of the next. But the affirmation would be unnecessary if the belief in a future life disappeared or radically changed. Secularism itself—whatever Mr. Holyoake may say—is an attitude. The face that was turned from God is turned towards Man. What will follow is beyond the range of Atheism or Agnosticism. Presently it is beyond the range of Secularism. It is not to be determined by any system. It depends on positive knowledge and the laws of evolution.

G. W. FOOTE.

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What is Spiritualism?

A study of the many mutations of human thought reveals the fact that persons who have neglected proper critical analysis find themselves ready victims to all kinds of superstition. And even some of those who, to a certain extent, do exercise their critical faculties are not exempt from yielding to superstitious allurements. Having devoted many years to the examination of the pretensions of Spiritualism, I have arrived at the conclusion that it is not based upon demonstrated facts, and that the belief that spirits survive death and reappear to the living is the result of emotional feelings uncontrolled by reason and unaccompanied by a fair critical analysis. I fully endorse the following statements of Professor Haeckel, which are to be found on page 313 of his latest work, *The Riddle of the Universe*. He there states :—

> "One of the most remarkable forms of superstition, which still takes a very active part in modern life, is Spiritism. It is a surprising and a lamentable fact that millions of educated people are still dominated by this dreary superstition; even distinguished scientists are entangled in it.....It is a frequent boast of Spiritists that even eminent men of science defend their superstition. In Germany, A. Zöllner and Fechner are quoted as instances; in England, Wallace and Crookes. The regrettable circumstance that physicists and biologists of such distinction have been led astray by Spiritism is accounted for, partly by their excess of imagination and defect of the critical faculty, and partly by the powerful influence of dogmas which a religious education imprinted on the brain in early youth. Moreover, it was precisely through the famous *séances* at Leipzig, in which the physicists, Zöllner, Fechner, and Wilhelm Weber, were imposed on by the clever American conjurer, Slade, that the fraud of the latter was afterwards fully exposed; he was discovered to be a common impostor."

Such testimony as this from a recognised scientist should cause inquirers to pause before giving their adherence to the Spiritualist theory, which I believe to be destitute of all trustworthy evidence.

Spiritualism, as its exponents allege, means the belief that, in addition to our material bodies, we possess what is called a spirit that lives after we are dead, and has the power, which it frequently exercises, of manifesting itself to those who still inhabit the earth. Now the first thing to consider is: What is a spirit? I have frequently asked this question, but have never received a satisfactory answer. And yet it is indispensable that we should know what the term really means, for upon our possessing that knowledge will depend our ability to judge of the truth or falsehood of Spiritualism. The New Testament says: "A spirit hath not flesh and bones" (Luke xxiv. 39); but how such an existence can possess mobility and intelligence science and philosophy have failed to demonstrate. Spirit has also been described as "an intangible, invisible, intelligent power, capable of acting on, and influencing, physical organisms." Such a definition is a manifest absurdity; for how that which is intangible and invisible can be seen, felt, and conversed with is beyond ordinary comprehension.

Another answer as to what is a spirit is that given by Sergeant Cox, who says: "Spirit is not, and cannot be, immaterial." The soul "is a refined Body"; "its substance is vastly more refined than the thinnest gas" (Podmore's *Studies in Psychical Research*, pp. 35-6). If this were a correct definition of spirit, it would be, like all matter, subject to change and disorganisation, which, it is said, spirit is not. I should like to be informed how fine matter must become before it ceases to be subject to laws of integration and disintegration, distribution and re-distribution. If spirit is refined, sublimated matter, there is no possibility of immortality of any one form, *unless* at a certain stage of refinement matter ceases to act in accordance with those laws which we now observe in all material operations; which is an absurdity. The latest attempt to define Spiritualism has been made by Mr. G. H. Bibbings, editor of *Psyche*. According to him, Spiritualism is "the art or science of communing with excarnate intelligence." Now, this is not only no definition, but the use of the words "art or science" in the sentence is entirely out of place. J. S. Mill, in his *System of Logic* (vol. i., p. 2), says: "To define is to select from among all the properties of a thing those which shall be understood to be designated and declared by its name." The word "thing," here mentioned, represents what, in Mr. Bibbings's supposed definition, is called Spiritualism; but there is no evidence that "art or science" is among its properties. Therefore, Mr. Bibbings's definition is logically defective. Mill further says that the properties "must be well known to us." The fact, however, is, that art and science are not known to us as properties of Spiritualism. Art is a term used to indicate the modification or improvement of things by human skill for a particular purpose. But how can art be applied to that which is immaterial? And what purpose can it serve in connection with a spirit which has not nerves, muscles, flesh, nor bones? What skill has Spiritualism manifested in dealing with mundane affairs? Has it made known to the world a single fact that has not been discovered by other means? Moreover, how can art be employed where the object upon which it could be exercised is absent?

As to science, it is certainly unscientific to positively assert that there are other than natural causes operating in the universe. The function of science is to discover and classify facts, and to enable their importance to be recognised as being superior to mere speculation. Karl Pearson writes: "The scientific man has, above all things, to aim at self-elimination in his judgments, to provide an argument which is as true for each individual mind as for his own.....He will demand a high standard of reasoning, a clear insight into facts and their results" (*Grammar of Science*, pp. 7 and 11). Spiritualists have not hitherto done this, for their arguments refer to the subjective, and are therefore true, if at all, to their own minds only, and not to others. All physical science is based upon verified facts, which is the basis of all scientific experiments; it has nothing to do with conjectures of what is said to exist apart from the natural. Science does not teach that we are dual in this life and monistic in some other. If man has a continued existence after death, in which he manifests the capacity to think and to make his thoughts known, he must, judging from our knowledge of the requirements of mentality, be subject to the same laws of thought then as he is now. Hence to assume, as Spiritualists do, that man, when he has lost his material perceptive faculties, can retain the power of recognition, of thought, and of speech, is not science, but conjecture.

We are told that Spiritualism means "communing with excarnate intelligence." But what is that? Does it differ from carnate intelligence? If yes, in what particular? If no, is it reasonable to believe that intelligence, as at present understood, can be manifested when the conditions indispensable to such manifestations no longer exist? Moreover, Is it scientific to allege that intelligent communications can be made when the organs necessary for such communications are destroyed? By the word "intelligence" I mean the totality of mental activity; the ability to form and impart ideas. Of course, intelligence does not exist *per se*. It is not an entity, but a property or quality of a material organisation. It implies bodily senses and the power of perception. But this involves organism and environment, with action and interaction between the two. Besides, as we know intelligence, it is always associated with conscious beings, whose consciousness depends upon functional activity which is called life, which I regard as the result of the combination of different parts of matter. I define matter as being that which can be recognised by the senses. In the words of Professor Clifton, of Oxford, "it is that which occupies space and is cognised by the senses." Thomson and Tait allege that "the Naturalist may be content to know matter as that which can be perceived by the senses, or as that which can be acted upon by, or can exert, force" (*Natural Philosophy*, vol. i., p. 161). Now, as life is necessary to intelligence, and organisation is requisite to life, it is legitimate to conclude that when life and organisation are gone intelligence will cease.

I do not deny that intelligence is shown at some of the so-called spiritual *séances;* but such intelligence is always associated with living beings. Whatever manifests intelligence must be something. If it is material,

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it is not separate from matter; and if it is not material, what is it? The verdict of science is, that force and matter are inseparable; that all the phenomena of nature are visible only in, and through, matter; that life is but a form or mode of motion; that thought, consciousness, the ego or self, are but resultants of force in matter; and that when the change called death ensues there is an end to that individual consciousness. Professor Tyndall, in his "Belfast Address," writes:—

> "The mind runs along the line of thought which connects the phenomena, and from beginning to end finds no break in the chain. But when we endeavor to pass, by a similar process, from the physics of the brain to the phenomena of consciousness, we meet a problem which transcends any conceivable expansion of the powers we now possess. We may think over the subject again and again; it eludes all intellectual presentation."

Such is the teaching of science, and it appears to me to be based upon facts and to be justified by experience.

Charles Watts.

English Missions in India.

It has been calculated that no less than one million and a-half sterling is spent annually in Great Britain on the support of foreign missionary enterprise. The exact number of missionaries engaged in the work is not stated; but, judging from a number of annual reports that lie before me as I write, there cannot be less than 25,000, while it is more probably nearer 30,000. One body alone—the Church Missionary Society—spends upwards of £400,000 annually, and employs no less than 8,000 agents in different parts abroad. The expenditure is therefore lavish, the workers are numerous, and, as the public at large are invited to contribute to their support, they have a clear right to know to what extent this enormous expenditure of energy and cash is successful.

Unfortunately, this is no easy matter to determine. True, yearly reports are issued by most of the missionary societies, but, apart from the fact that these reports do not contain much of the information one would like to gather, they are *ex parte* statements, compiled by the missionaries themselves, and there is not much opportunity of testing their truthfulness. It is plain that these statements are not likely to underestimate either the quality or quantity of the work performed; and there is direct evidence, as will be seen later, that, on comparing the different reports, a great deal is written with the deliberate intention of misleading people at home.

It is my intention to publish shortly a somewhat lengthy examination of missionary enterprise in all parts of the world; at present I intend limiting my criticism to India alone. The only thing I wish my readers to bear in mind is, that all the statistics given below are taken from their own reports. I cannot guarantee *their* accuracy. I *can* guarantee mine in summarising the results, and I think I can safely assume that the case is not *better* than they represent it, but that it is, in all probability, much worse.

It is also worth bearing in mind that, in selecting India, I am by no means taking a country where the conditions of missionary enterprise are specially unfavorable. They are decidedly the reverse. The Government of the country, to mention only one circumstance, is professedly Christian; and this must rank as an important recommendation of its religion to the native population. In other countries, where there is not the same governmental patronage, the annual reports show poorer results. I have selected this field so as to take missionary work with everything in its favor; and, with everything in its favor, foreign missionary enterprise stands, on its own testimony, as one of the most colossal pieces of folly and knavery existing.

What, then, is the result of missionary work in our Indian Empire? The agents are numerous; the expenditure is lavish; the conditions are, as I have said, peculiarly favorable. What are the results? We will take, first of all, the question of the *number* of converts reported. First in order of size and expenditure comes the Church Missionary Society. This Society had, in India, for the year ending March 31, 3,424 agents—406 Europeans and 3,018 natives; while the money transmitted from England for their use reaches the colossal sum of £113,630 17s. 6d. The general returns give, under the vague heading "Baptisms for the Year," the figure of 8,423. Out of this number, however, 5,978 are children, and there is nothing in the report to show whether these are the children of existing Church members, the children of the current year's converts, or simply children that have been induced, by methods more or less honorable, to undergo baptism. As, however, on looking through the report, it is clear that a large number of the converts are unmarried, it is evident that either these children belong to existing Christians—in which case the report is deliberately misleading, since it suggests the idea of actual conversions—or they are children baptised *without their parents*, a circumstance which gives rise to grave doubts concerning the method adopted to secure them. I emphasize this point here in order to avoid constant reference to it hereafter.

Putting on one side the conversion of children—which can hardly rank as a serious performance—the year's results would stand at 2,445 adult conversions as the fruits of the labor of 3,018 missionaries. Poor as this result is, a still further deduction has to be made. The report says nothing of losses, and these form no inconsiderable item, as we shall see. In the previous year's report (1899) the number of communicants was returned at 33,804. Adding to this the 8,423 baptisms recorded in this year's report, the number should now be 42,227, whereas the actual figures are 35,640; thus registering a loss of 6,587. This would reduce the net gain—including children and adults—to 1,836 as the result of the labor of over three thousand missionaries and an expenditure of £113,630 17s. 6d.—an all-round cost of over £60 per convert, without reckoning the money raised and spent locally.

The little impression made by Christian missions on the people of India is still more apparent if, instead of taking last year's figures alone, we go back a matter of three or four years. In 1896 the number of communicants stood at 32,009. Thus in four years the number has only increased 3,631, which, instead of giving us even 1,836 per year, averages only a little over 900, or about one convert per year to every three missionaries, and these latter backed up by numerous charitable agencies, schools, medical dispensaries, etc.

Let us see how the matter looks in detail. The work in Bengal was commenced in 1814. Last year there was a staff of 443 agents, who received from England over £15,000. During the twelve months they baptised 101 adults and 554 children—one adult convert to every four missionaries. But here, again, a discount has to be made; for during the past four years the net increase in the number of communicants has been only 334—an average of 84 per year, the 334 costing in round figures £60,000. And after 86 years' work the total number of communicants stands at 2,895, or an average of just over 33 per year. Madras, with a staff of 66 agents, has increased its communicants by 93 in four years. In Tinnevally there are 1,018 missionaries who last year baptised 373, and have realised a net gain of 227 in four years.

It is the same, if not worse, with other missions. The London Missionary Society has in India a staff of 1,844 missionaries, who received from England last year over £47,000. The number of people baptised or converted each year is not given, except incidentally—a circumstance that reflects more credit upon their "cuteness" than upon their honesty. But as in 1895-6 the Church members stood at 9,809, and in 1899-1900 at 10,998, there has been consequently a gain of 1,189 in four years. This gives us an average of about 300 per year, or, to look at the matter from another point of view, each convert represents the united labor of six missionaries for twelve months and an expenditure of £158.

This is the general result; let us look at some of the details. At Bellary, after 90 years' work, and with a present staff of 46 agents, there are 166 Church members—an average gain of less than two per year, while there is an actual *decrease* from 172 to 166 members during the past four years. Last year the 46 agents baptised 15 adults and children out of a population of 736,000. At Salem there are 239 Church members after 76 years' work,

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and with a present staff of 28. Four years ago the Annual Report said: "The hostility so painfully manifest a couple of years ago has now almost entirely ceased, and Mr. Devasagayam has been much encouraged by the attentive bearing of the crowd, and also by the friendly and sympathetic attitude of the educated classes" (Report for 1896, p. 95). The result of this "attentive bearing" and "sympathetic attitude" is that, whereas in 1896 the Church members numbered 240, they are now 239. In Madras there are 201 Church members after 70 years' propaganda. The staff of missionaries numbers 63. "There are distinct signs of progress" in Madras, is the cheering statement in the current year's report (p. 164). The only evidence of its presence is that the Church members have dropped from 221 in 1896 to 201 in 1900.

At Berhampur, "in all parts of the district, and in all branches of the work, there is movement" (Annual Report, p. 110). The use of the non-committal word "movement" is a stroke of genius. There are now ten members less than there were four years ago. Still, there is "movement." True, it is movement in the wrong direction, but no inaccuracy can be charged against this portion of the report. The total number of Church members is 28 after 76 years' propaganda. At Benares "the native Church is steadily growing in numbers" (Annual Report, 1896). Very steadily, I imagine, as, after eighty years' work, the Church membership reaches the enormous total of 36; and the 37 agents, while failing to secure a single convert during 1899, have actually managed to lose one of the 36. Still, "we believe a quiet work is going on among the women" (p. 115). The "believe" is distinctly humorous.

Next to the London Missionary Society comes the Baptist Missionary Society, with a staff of 552 agents and an expenditure of £25,989 12s. 2d. There are all the usual reports of the wonderful effects of the preaching, with the customary insignificant results in the shape of actual converts. The report for 1899 contains the following from one of its agents in India: "I have never before experienced such a general desire on the part of vast multitudes of the people to listen attentively and thoughtfully to the preaching of the old, old story of Jesus" (p. 16). From another: "I have seen an audience of out-and-out idolaters and Mohammedans held spellbound many times since I came to India." And the result of this "spellbound" attention of "vast multitudes" to the preaching of the Gospel? Well, last year 552 missionaries gained 369 converts and lost 389, spending nearly £26,000 over the operation. One of two things is certain, on comparing results with promises. Either the stories of the burning desire of people to listen to the Gospel—stories common with all, and repeated year after year—are deliberate falsehoods, uttered for the purpose of tickling the pockets of subscribers at home, or they betray a lack of judgment and common sense perfectly appalling—even in a missionary.

In what has gone before I have not only taken for granted the general accuracy of the returns given; I have also assumed that the conversions tabulated are those of people who, previous to conversion, were not Christians. Certainly this is the impression most people have of these "conversions." This impression is, however, entirely erroneous. In a large number of instances the cases of conversion given are not those of non-Christians, but of converts belonging to other missions that have been captured or bought, and who have already figured in numerous reports. Some years ago (1888) Canon Isaac Taylor pointed out that the rivalry of the different missionary agencies induced "converts" to put themselves up for auction, and sell themselves to the mission that offered most. He cites, in support of this statement, the case of one "inquirer," who was already getting £1 per month from the Church Missionary Society agent—no inconsiderable sum for India—who struck for higher pay, and went off to a rival mission to "inquire" at an increased salary. (*Fortnightly Review*, October, 1888.) By thus going from missionary to missionary, figuring first as a hopeful inquirer, and afterwards as an actual convert, a single individual may be transformed into a dozen or more by the time he reaches the British public, not one of the reports making any mention of the fact that many of their cases have been "converted" by many other missions before reaching their hands.

That this is no exaggeration I shall prove in my next article by running over the charges of stealing converts, brought by the different agencies one against the other.

C. Cohen.

(To be continued.)

Angels Around.

The Protestant has, for the most part, dismissed the angels from ordinary life. We see their figures in church windows and on Christmas cards; but no one expects to meet them in the street. The age of angels, like the age of miracles, is past. The Protestant is content to believe that angelic visitants occasionally interrupted the monotony of the past; but he has given up the hope of himself entertaining them unawares. His general impression seems to be that angels are confined in heaven by a strict quarantine, and until he himself is fitted with wings and a halo he is unlikely to see them or be influenced by them.

To the Catholic, however, the angels are, or ought to be, an ever-present thought; for he is taught that it is a point of faith that they are entrusted with the special care of men. They are not mere abstractions, sitting on rainbows, twanging harps, but beings constantly meddling in mundane affairs. And it is the general teaching of the Catholic Church that each soul, upon its first entrance into the world, is entrusted to one of these faithful guides, who accompanies it throughout life. It has been profoundly debated as to whether Jesus Christ possessed such a guiding or guardian angel; but it is generally assumed that he did not require one, although he had the legions of heaven constantly at command. Ordinary people, however, are each allotted a guardian angel, and all the favorable accidents of life are attributed by the devout Catholic to the influence of this being. Stories of the interference of guardian angels are favorite subjects of Catholic literature, and are largely circulated. These anecdotes are just as foolish as other religious narratives, and many of them seem to be inter-religious, if one may coin the word, for the same story which is told in Protestant books as an instance of providential deliverance often reappears in Catholic works as an instance of the care of the guardian angel.

I have before me a collection of these tales—made in Germany. I gather from it that, in ancient times, the guardian angels only busied themselves with important personages, for the earlier stories only deal with emperors, princes, popes, and the cardinal saints of the Church. As the ages rolled on, however, the guardians became more democratic, and the modern instances of angelic interference are confined to poor people.

One narrative, quoted from the History of the Society of Jesus, deserves notice. St. Ignatius, being ordered by the doctor to return to Spain, wrote to his nine first companions, who were in Paris, to proceed to Venice. "They set out at once, although the time of the year was severe, and took their way through Germany. One evening they alighted in a small village, *whose parish priest was infected with the errors of Luther.* He was so exasperated at seeing them openly carry their rosaries that he resolved to destroy them. This wicked purpose was to be carried out next morning; but the good angel, to whom St. Francis Xavier and his companions daily recommended their journey, woke them at break of day, warned them of the danger hanging over them, and ordered them to follow him, and led them into safety." As Herodotus says: "I leave everyone to his own opinion upon this matter."

When you have the Guardian Angel very strong, he is very useful. St. Frances of Rome was continually attended by one in the form of a little golden-haired boy, who was dressed in a tunic, the color of which varied on different days, in order to match the altar cloth. His countenance was as brilliant as the sun, and "at night St. Frances could read and work as easily as in daylight by the brightness of this, her celestial companion." Furthermore, this supernatural light was so strong that the saint was able to anticipate the Röntgen rays, for she could see inside everybody, and perceive

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their most secret thoughts. It is a great pity that there are so few Catholics of such transcendent piety. If we had a few more of them, there would be no need to illuminate the streets at night with gas or the electric light; the presence of the angels would do the work, and lessen the rates and taxes. Our surgeons would have no need to burden themselves with X ray apparatus, but could avail themselves of the brilliancy of a guardian angel to carry out their operations.

The care of the guardian is not confined to this life, for the angel has been seen to conduct the soul of its *protégé* into Purgatory, *and then wait outside* until it was sufficiently purified, when he took charge of it again, to convey it to Paradise; reminding one of the working man taking his Sunday dinner to the baker's, and waiting outside the shop until it was cooked.

It does not do, however, to forget one's guardian, or the forgetfulness may be mutual. A short time ago, in the village of Obdorf, a peasant family was at its morning prayers. The mother, being, like Martha, very busy with household affairs, wished to omit some of the invocations. But her little son called out: "Oh, mother! I *must* pray to my angel guardian. Who will take care of me if I don't?" And so he concluded his customary devotions. In the course of the morning his father was ordered to cut down an oak tree, which, he noticed, had grown into the shape of a gigantic Y. The axe was laid to the foot of the tree, and it was just about to fall, when the horrified father noticed his little son playing upon the very spot where the tree would come down. It was too late to speak or move. Down came the oak with a crash. The next thing the father saw was his son, perfectly uninjured, standing apparently in the midst of the foliage. The angel had so guided the tree that the two forks of the Y came on either side of the child, and left him untouched; and thus the evening papers were unable to chronicle "another horrible accident." Quibbling scoffers may say that there was no sign of the visible intervention of the angelic guardian in this case; and therefore we will transcribe the following story.

Unfortunately, the narrative is not related by the principal actor, and no names are given. These little defects, however, are to be found in all religious anecdotes. "A corporal of dragoons in a Venetian regiment" [name unknown] tells us that he was present at the battle of Königingrätz, or, as we generally call it in this country, Sadowa. The Austrian cavalry were covering the retreat of their beaten army. As the dragoons rode through the streets of a village, to beat back the Prussian hussars, "Count M." suddenly saw a child of some three or four years of age, and with a face of most unearthly beauty, standing in the roadway in imminent danger of being run over by a passing gun-carriage. To snatch the boy from the ground and place him on his saddlebow was the work of an instant. The Prussians were swept away by the charge; but when the dragoons returned they found that the little stranger was quite dead. Two bullets had passed through his body, one of them lodging in the Count's clothes. Out of the thousands on that battlefield, one guardian angel had done his duty, and had materialised himself sufficiently to become a bullet-stopping shield for the noble Count.

A worthy priest, while visiting his parishioners, ascended to the first floor of a tenement house, and was startled to see a little boy sitting on the landing, playing with an open razor. "Mrs. M'Cafferty," he cried, "why don't you take the razor away from him. He'll do himself a mortal injury." "Sure now," replied Mrs. M'Cafferty, "the dear child is very happy with it; and don't I know that his blissid guarrdian angel is at hand to protect him, the darrling." "Yes, yes, that's true for ye, Mrs. M'Cafferty," rejoined the good father softly, "but who's to protect the guardian angel? Suppose the dear child were to fall down the stairs! He might easily cut the angel in half as he flew down to catch him." "Begorr!" cried the alarmed Mrs. M'Cafferty, "I never thought of that." And she dexterously removed the child from the razor, and placed the latter in safety in the family chest of drawers.

We are somewhat too apt to imagine that the work of opposing superstition is over; that the progress of exact knowledge has swept away the last lingering vestige of excuse for believing in the supernatural. But we have only to open our eyes and look around to see numbers of people still living contentedly in mediæval darkness. Some of the worst features of superstition may have disappeared; but when we find the doctrine of angelic presence still inculcated by a considerable body of men, who are learned according to their own standard, it is obvious that there is much to be done yet. Catholicism is waning in proportion to the population, like all other religious denominations; but it is still capable of making a great deal of noise, and some show. At Westminster it is rearing up a new Tower of Babel, which promises to be the hugest and ugliest barn in London; and we are likely to hear more of it yet. Consequently, its doctrines and beliefs should be kept in view as present dangers, not merely as historical anachronisms.

Chilperic.

A Biblical Bald-headed Buffer.

In the Biblical days, when we're led to suppose
That the people were ignorant duffers,
When the lubberly noodles were led by the nose
And bamboozled by bald-headed buffers,

When they swallowed the "kid" of the prophets of God,
Like the bait on the hooks that the fish bite,
Lived Elisha, who put on the mantle and trod
In the shoes of Elijah the Tishbite.

Now, Elije was the friend of the "Ancient of Days,"
And our "Jack" was as good as his master,
For he walked all the days of his life in the ways
Of our heavenly blesser and blaster.

Now, the head of our tale (keep the smiles from your face)
Shows the state of the "poll" of our hero;
'Twas a bright and a shining and beautiful place,
Like the realms of our heavenly Nero.

To the banks of the Jordan he travelled one day,
With his mantle divided a river,
Then he crossed it on foot: if you doubt what I say,
Something's wrong with your heart—or your liver.

On arriving at Jericho people found fault
With the water, for no one could drink it;
So he sweetened the stuff by inserting some salt;
'Tis the truth, though you hardly would think it.

When he'd finished his wonderful trick, he was chaffed
By some children who hardly could toddle;
And they shouted in Hebrew "There's hair," and they laughed,
For he hadn't a hair on his noddle.

As I've already stated, those children were small,
Only lately let loose from their nurses;
Men of sense would have taken no notice at all,
But the prophet gave vent to some curses.

And he had his revenge on those poor little dears,
For, according to holy report, he
Was supplied by the Lord with a couple of bears,
And they worried and slew two and forty.

Now, we're bound to admit, when a person does wrong,
It is right that that person should suffer;
But the "sentence of death" was a little too strong
Just for booing a bald-headed buffer.

Nowadays, if we say to a parson "There's hair!"
When his hirsute appendage he's minus,
We are never condemned to be killed by a bear—
Why, there's hardly a "beak" that'll fine us.

But the ways of the Lord and his "pilots" are not
Quite the same as the ways of his laymen;
If the latter resembled the former—Great Scott!
Let us hope that they never will. Amen!

Ess Jay Bee.

Sincere believers in Christianity will soon cease to interfere with the management of a world where they profess themselves to be pilgrims and strangers. The new supreme being [humanity] is no less jealous than the old, and will not accept the servants of two masters. But the truth is that the more zealous theological partisans, whether royalists, aristocrats, or democrats, have now for a long time been insincere. God is to them but the nominal chief of a hypocritical conspiracy, a conspiracy which is even more contemptible than it is odious. Their object is to keep the people from all great social improvements by assuring them that they will find compensations for their miseries in an imaginary future life. —*Auguste Comte.*

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Acid Drops.

The parsons are becoming infected with the sensationalism of the press. Some time ago the clerical authorities at St. Paul's Cathedral were with difficulty restrained from holding a memorial service over the men and women said to have been massacred in the British Legation at Peking. No such massacre had taken place, but the newspapers had reported it in great detail, and the parsons wanted to get an advertisement out of the business. At the last moment, however, they saw the ridiculousness of the position in which they would be placed if the news—as was whispered—turned out to be false, and they quietly backed out of the engagement.

Last Sunday there was another of these "previous" blunders committed at St. Paul's Cathedral. The preacher, an eminent Church divine, denounced the selfishness of rich men. He said that it had been difficult to raise a million for the South African War Fund, yet a millionaire could give his daughter half that sum on her husband's safe return from the front, and she had spent it straight away on furnishing a new house for herself. This part of the reverend gentleman's sermon was founded on a newspaper report, which turns out to have been a mere invention. "We are asked to state," said the *Daily News* on Tuesday, "that the frequent reports to the effect that the Duchess of Marlborough has received any sum of money from Mr. Vanderbilt are entirely without foundation, and are totally untrue." It is evident, therefore, that even the most distinguished preachers are far from infallible, and that some of them are distinctly lacking in the charity which thinketh no evil.

The Church Lads' Brigade paraded at St. Paul's Cathedral on Monday evening. A special service was held for them, and a special sermon was preached by the Bishop of Stepney. We do not know what was his text, but it must have been easy to find a suitable one in such a miscellaneous book as the Bible. "I came not to send peace, but a sword" lies side by side with "Whoso taketh the sword shall perish by the sword."

According to the Bishop of Stepney, by far the most generous contributions to East London Church work are given by brewers. Very likely. The brewers know what they are about—which is more than can be said of the bishops, except so far as taking the money is concerned.

Rev. Dr. Horton preached a sermon on "Religion and Science" at Bradford during the meeting of the British Association. In the course of it he referred to Haeckel as teaching that an "All-conscious Spirit underlies and directs, or wills, all phenomena." Two letters have appeared in the *Bradford Observer*, by "Monist" and "Scientist," pointing out that Dr. Horton had no right to make such a statement concerning the great German evolutionist. "Monist" accuses Dr. Horton of superficial knowledge or wilful deception. The reverend gentleman has not replied, but he will probably not repeat the statement in Bradford, whatever he may do elsewhere.

"Darkness there, and nothing more!" as the hero of Poe's *Raven* said. Such was the state of the case at St. James's Church, Bermondsey, on Monday evening, when the Bishop of Rochester was preaching a reopening sermon. About £2,000 had been spent on improvements, and the electric light had been installed, but it went out before the Bishop had finished, and the church was left in total darkness except for a few gas jets at either end. The Bishop continued his sermon, and more gas jets were lit, but many people left the church at once. Heaven was their home, but they didn't want to go home in a stampede.

"The Total Depravity of Human Nature" was the subject of a paper read by the Rev. P. E. Thomas, vicar of St. Barnabas's, Blackburn, at a meeting of the Evangelical Protestant Union in Manchester. The reverend gentleman did not draw proofs from his own nature. Nobody ever does that. He looked around upon his neighbors and found them a devilish bad lot. What with drunkards, gamblers, thieves, and irreligionists, it seemed to him that men were as bad as ever. The more civilisation advanced, the more did vice stalk about with shameless effrontery; and the filthy conversation of Sodom never equalled the loathsome bestiality of the workshops and factories of Britain. Education was no good—nothing was any good, except religion. That was the man of God's sovereign recipe, and he dispenses it professionally. No wonder he teaches it will do the trick. Still, he forgets that other people know something of history, and are aware that religion has been operating and boasting for thousands of years, with the results we all see. Even the Christian religion has been on the job for nearly two thousand years. When the reverend gentleman recommends more religion, he invites the retort that religion has been the cause of more than half the mischief.

"Ye must be born again!" cries the Rev. P. E. Thomas. Well, we should say that *he* ought to be born again, anyhow. He was evidently meant for a better world than this, and if he cannot get born again in some degree of harmony with it we strongly advise him to emigrate.

Henry Hill Aby, a well-known local preacher, of Wakefield, whose case we referred to last week, has since been sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labor for embezzlement. His defalcations amounted to more than £1,000, but only three trivial charges were pressed against him. He may consider himself lucky. Perhaps he is thanking the Lord.

Another man of God gone wrong. Samuel Walton Kay, formerly vicar of Butlers Marston, Warwickshire, has been sentenced at Lancaster Quarter Sessions to five years' penal servitude for obtaining money by false pretences. He had previously been convicted for forgery. His impassioned appeal for mercy had more effect upon himself than upon the judge. He fainted in the dock on hearing his sentence.

"May God forgive me for what I am going to do," said William John Page, a waiter, aged twenty-nine, before shooting himself dead outside Snow Hill police-station. In the same letter he said: "You must blame Ella for all I have done." All she did was to decline to marry him while he was not in a position to support her. His hope in God, therefore, went hand in hand with injustice to the woman he professed to love. Such is the sublime influence of religion!

Christ promised that when two or three were gathered together in his name there would he be in the midst of them. It was not a political promise, such as might be made by a Parliamentary candidate, but a *bona fide* guarantee. One, therefore, finds it rather perplexing to reconcile with his utterance the recent disaster at a Russian monastery. Not two or three, but 5,000 pilgrims, assembled at a religious festival. During the night the floor of the upper room of a building gave way, under the weight of pilgrims sleeping upon it. Thirty-six women and four men were crushed to death, and a score of others were injured. If Christ was in their midst, he was not of much avail.

"When Christian Churches cease to kick each other whilst they pray." This little flash of wit, not unworthy of Voltaire, sparkles in a letter to the *Church Gazette* in criticism of foreign missions. By the way, it is regrettable to learn from an editorial notice that the *Church Gazette* will cease to appear after two or three more issues unless pecuniary aid is forthcoming. 'Twas ever thus with journals in advance of the age. A wretched religious abortion like the *Christian World* sells to the extent of hundreds of thousands, and is in a most flourishing condition.

Either reporters must be, without apparent motive, terribly untrustworthy recorders of what they hear, or parsons must be abominable liars. The Rev. W. D. P. Bliss was reported to have said, at a meeting of the London branch of the Christian Social Union, that in the United States "the Church was doing more in the fight against Mammon than all the religious bodies put together." The Rev. Bliss sends a correction to the press. He states that what he really said was: "More of our clergymen took pronounced stand, and did active work for Socialism, than those of all other religious bodies." The Rev. Bliss does not like to appear as denouncing Mammon. He probably feels that, looking at the source of his income, it would be ungrateful. So that, like other preachers who have been caught tripping, he says he has been *mis*reported.

The *Church Times*, discussing the forthcoming School Board elections, hopes that, in this connection, we shall be "rid for ever of these unseemly wranglings about religion." So we shall, when religion it kept out of governmental elementary education altogether.

The Welsh Congregationalists of Glamorganshire are proposing to enter upon a vigorous crusade against Sunday desecration. They say that Sunday travelling, cycling, golfing, etc., are on the increase in the Principality. A Conference is to be held at Pontypridd to deal with this serious evil. If these good Christian Welshmen would study the attitude of Christ and Paul in regard to holy days, they might possibly sink their religious scruples. On other grounds Wales—especially North Wales—is not at all likely to profit by absurd Puritanical restrictions.

Here is some gossip from the "Woman's World" column in the *British Weekly*: "Mrs. B., proprietress of a small

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circulating library, to her best customer: 'There's a great deal of talk going on about this book, *The Master Christian*. Everyone comes into the shop and wants to read it. Do you know, ma'am, I think that book will do a great deal of harm.' 'In what way, Mrs. B.? I am sure it was not intended to do harm.' 'It will do harm by making young people infidels; for once they come to think little of the churches, the next step will be to give up their religion. I know a young girl who was very regular and devout in attending the Church service, and she said that after reading *The Master Christian* she felt she could never care to enter a church as long as she lived.'"

Until 1869 Exeter was one of the poorest of bishoprics, the stipend being only £2,700 a year. On that miserable pittance the poor right reverend father-in-God had to subsist as he could. How he managed to rub along on £52 a week will always remain a profound mystery. But he did it somehow. From 1869 till 1877 the stipend was £5,000 a year, which was a decided improvement. £800 a year, however, was knocked off when the new See of Truro was established, and the Bishop of Exeter has normally an annual income of £4,200. The new Bishop will only receive £2,800 a year during the lifetime of Bishop Bickersteth, who takes a retiring pension of £1,400 a year. No doubt the latter gentleman will draw that amount as long as possible, and annuitants are proverbially long-lived. Just as probably the former gentleman will secretly grudge every minute that his pensioned predecessor lingers superfluously upon this mortal scene.

Bishop Philpotts, who used to draw £2,700 a year from the See of Exeter, enjoyed other emoluments, and it was understood that his income generally went up to five figures. Eventually he had to die, like less fortunate mortals; and it must have been a bitter thing to leave all that steady revenue behind. How the Bishop fared on the other side of Jordan we are not in a position to say; but we read in the Gospels that a rich man has a tremendous difficulty in forcing a passage into heaven; in fact, that it is just as easy for a camel—hump and all—to work its way through the eye of a needle. We never heard of a camel achieving that feat, and we fear, therefore, that Bishop Philpotts has emigrated to the wrong establishment.

The *Sunday Sun* man who compiled last week's list of "Books Received" seems to have been upset by the General Election. The recent floods of oratory have been too much for him. With the painful experience fresh upon him, he includes in the list: "*The Origin of* SPEECHES, *by Means of Natural Selection*, by Charles Darwin, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S. (John Murray.) 2s. 6d. net." Certainly there has been plenty of scope for "natural selection" among recent speeches, whatever their origin may have been.

John Caney, an Edmonton tailor, said: "I trust in God as my healer." He is now dead, though evidence was given that if he had taken the medicine offered him he would undoubtedly have recovered. The Coroner said a person might just as reasonably refuse to go to a baker's for bread because he trusted to God to feed him. But this is beside the mark. The deceased relied upon Scriptural teaching, which excludes the use of medicine. The prayer of faith did not make him whole; but, at any rate, he tried it, and in that way displayed more courage and consistency than the bulk of professing Christians can honestly lay claim to.

"Is the Bible going out of fashion?" asks the *Liverpool Post*. Yes, certainly, the old Bible, as our forefathers knew it, is going out of fashion. Nowadays we have a new book, with vastly diminished claims. The Bible is no longer the Word of God, but a collection of writings *containing* the Word of God. The prize puzzle of the age is to pick out the Word. The pious punter "backs his fancy," while the clergy provide the stable tips and the "dead certs."

As a sample of the way in which Christians abandon the Bible in one breath and exalt it in another, a recent address by Professor Marcus Dods, in Renfield Free Church, stands quite pre-eminent. Historical errors are of no consequence, he says. The object of the Bible, or the New Testament at least, is simply to exhibit Christ. As if, indeed, that did not involve questions of history, and very serious ones too. This method of playing fast and loose with the book may suit the exigencies of Christian apologetics, but it is scarcely honest. Whether it imposes on any but superficial minds is more than doubtful.

Much amusement seems to have been created in Marlborough-street Police-court by the Chinese method of taking the oath. Lee Foo, the complainant, went into the witness-box and knelt down. The usher handed him a thick, common saucer, which he was told to break. Lee Foo threw it on the ground; but it bounced up again, whole. He was told to throw it harder, and did so, the saucer smashing into several pieces. The Usher (solemnly): "The saucer is cracked, and if you do not tell the truth your soul will be cracked like the saucer." Those who took part in the formality seem to have been already "cracked." We are told that the ceremony created laughter in court. But, after all, this form of oath-taking is only a trifle more absurd, perhaps because less familiar, than the practice of kissing a book. The laugh is not against the Chinaman alone.

Sunday observance was one of the subjects discussed at the Lincoln Diocesan Conference. Mr. S. Cheney Garfit declared that the English Sunday was fast going, and apparently expected the public to receive the announcement with tears. Clergy and ministers of all denominations, he said, were realising that their congregations were not what they once were. No doubt; and still our eyes are not bedimmed, nor our voice raised in wailing. The chief idea of Sunday now, he continued, was to have the maximum of pleasure with the minimum of worship. Quite right. Through the baleful influence and example of the upper classes, the non-observance of Sunday had permeated to the lower classes. Society insisted upon having its week-end house-parties, lawn-tennis, concerts, and dinners.

Here the speaker, whether conscious of it or not, was treading on rather dangerous ground. It is quite safe for clerics to rail at the lower classes, but it will be well for them to be careful in their denunciations of "society." The "hupper suckles" may turn round and rend them. Anyway, they are not at all likely to diminish their Sunday pleasures in consequence of anything that parsons may say.

The Rev. Canon Bullock said that if anyone went to Paddington or Waterloo on any Sunday afternoon in summer and autumn, and saw the young men and young women, the old men and old women, crowding the platforms as they would for Henley Regatta, they would see that they were not the sort of people who could not possibly find time for recreation on any day except the Lord's Day. Well, suppose they can find time on weekdays, it is evident that Sunday is preferred as more convenient, otherwise it would not be utilised in the way described. What really is the use of the clergy endeavoring to stop the rational recreation on any day of people whose lives at the best are none too full of pleasure?

The *unco guid* at Leeds have hit upon a terrible punishment for the boy-smokers of cigarettes. They are not to be permitted to attend the Sunday-schools! A *Topical Times* contributor shudders at the cruel severity of this penalty. He remembers how, when he was a little boy, he looked forward all the week to the hours of didactic literature and wise exposition and soporific exhortation that the Sunday-school affords. And he has no doubt that Leeds is full of budding virtue as great as his own. He feels sure that no Leeds boy who values his Sunday's happiness will ever puff another cigarette.

The latest performance of Saint Antony of Padua, the patron saint of animals, is recorded in *La Croix du Littoral* by a French baron resident at Pas-de-Calais. Summoned to his stables, the baron found one of his best cows choking. A piece of turnip had stuck in her throat. Her body was greatly swollen, and in a few moments she would have fallen dead. "My man could not extract the offending turnip. I secretly promised five francs to Saint Antony. Hardly was the promise made when my man cried, 'She's swallowed it!' and after a sneeze or two the beast was herself again. Let wiseacres laugh as they may," adds the baron; "their sneers will not decrease my confidence in the good saint, nor my gratitude to him."

Some time ago a citizen of Connecticut bequeathed a large sum of money to an Adventist society in Boston to be expended in combating what his will characterises as "that greatest of all Pagan superstitions upon which are founded the great systems of error and superstition in the world—namely, the unscriptural, unreasonable, and pernicious doctrine of the immortality of the soul." The heirs are now contesting the will on the ground that it is contrary to public policy to countenance bequests in the interest of doctrines which are "inimical to the public welfare." What the heirs are probably most concerned about is not the public welfare, but their own personal interests. The testator would have done well to expend the bulk of the money according to his own liking during his life. Then there would have been no danger of its being diverted.

The Bishop of St. Albans has issued to his clergy a form of special thanksgiving for soldiers home from the war and for the restoration of peace. The thanksgiving service includes a prayer which says: "We yield Thee hearty thanks for that Thou hast vouchsafed to bring again these Thy servants to their home in peace." This is all very well, from a Churchman's point of view, but what about "those Thy servants" who have *not* come back to their homes in peace, but are

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lying dead in the veldts, rotting abroad while their relatives are weeping at home?

The *Methodist Times* reviews a book called *Infidelity Disarmed*, which professes to be a reply to lectures by Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, and is issued from the Toronto Methodist Book Room. The *M. T.* says: "This book, written by a Methodist layman, published by a Methodist Book Room, and commended by Methodists of note in the Dominion, is not a creditable performance. We admire the writer's eager advocacy of the Christian faith. We do not blame his honest adherence to certain traditional views now discarded by many saintly scholars; but the vulgarity of his abuse has caused us to blush. The certainty of the Colonel's damnation is repeatedly asserted with revolting callousness, and it is even the subject of the author's wit. Mr. Stephens frequently quotes from the works of the Agnostic. We wish we could say that his replies were always convincing; in graces of style and in courtesy of polemic the apologist is inferior to the iconoclast. We regret that we must record our conviction that the antidote will be not less harmful than the poison."

There is still more testimony in current literature as to the futility of Christian missions to foreign lands, particularly China. It is quite surprising to notice how, since Lord Salisbury set the ball rolling, Christian prints have hastened to assert, as if they had only just found it out, what Freethought journals have persistently urged for scores of years past. There seems a general agreement as to the paucity of genuine converts. The Christian missionary now finds it necessary to justify his occupation, particularly in regard to results. Therein he reminds us of that holy laborer for the Lord in foreign fields of whom it was written:—

> Despite his zeal, the Church's foes
> Declare his efforts all perverted,
> And that he counts upon his nose
> The heathen Indians he's converted.

There exists in France, as many people know, a congregation of nuns, called "Les Petites Sœurs des Pauvres." Their mission is to nurse the sick, and it is one of their rules not to ask their patient's religion. When, however, a sick person, not a Catholic, asks one of the sisters to bring a minister or a Rabbi to his bedside, they have (our Paris correspondent writes) some scruples about it, their own conscience apparently not enabling them to decide whether they would be right in acceding to the request. Accordingly, the point has been submitted to Rome, and the reply has come that no Roman Catholic, whether nun or layman, can take a message to a non-Catholic minister to attend a dying person. But a Roman Catholic may ask somebody who is not a Catholic to do so. In a Catholic country like France it is extremely probable that nuns in a convent will not be able, in an emergency, to find a Jew or a heretic to carry the message for them. In this case the Pope's decree would mean that the dying patient nursed by the nuns must be allowed to die without the rites of his own religion.—*Daily News.*

Miss Braddon, the famous sensational novelist, is not to be left behind by writers like Mr. Hall Caine and Miss Marie Corelli. She has burst upon the world with a new novel called *The Infidel*. The said infidel is a very beautiful girl, and a good one too, for she is ultimately to become a Christian. Her father, however, from whom she imbibed her infidelity, is a bad lot, having actually suffered a long term of imprisonment for fraud. The heroine is at last persuaded to become a Christian by the great John Wesley. It will thus be seen that the story is a "long ago" affair; in which respect Miss Braddon is a great deal sharper than the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. That gentleman went in for very recent chronology, and consequently courted a sad exposure.

One reviewer of Miss Braddon's new novel, while praising it generally, works in the nasty reflection that "there is a lack of subtlety in the character drawing." Of course there is. That almost goes without saying. Even a Tolstoi loses his art when he is bent on preaching. An artist in a pulpit is like a fish on dry land.

Another sudden death in a church. It happened at St. Paul's, Gloucester, on Sunday. The holy edifice was crowded, the occasion being the dedication festival; and just as the procession had finished the round of the building, Frederick Pattison, who was acting as cross-bearer, fainted, and expired in the vestry before the arrival of a doctor. Carrying the cross was too much for him. It was even too much for his Savior. But some people will say that such remarks are frivolous, and even blasphemous. Well, we are at least entitled to observe that a sudden death of this kind in a Secular Hall would give rise to plenty of pious criticism on the part of believers.

When people say "God help you" they mean it is all over with you. That is how Mr. Frederick Andrews, a professional burglar, used the expression when he was arrested and brought to the Kingston-on-Thames police-station. "I go in for night work," he said, "and God help the policeman that ever tries to stop me." This remark was backed up with a formidable knife, which the police, not trusting to divine protection, promptly secured and put away in a safe corner.

"Providence" has been pretty active of late in America. We note that the death-roll amongst the fishermen of New Brunswick, which has recently been visited by a record storm, now numbers forty-six, and may yet be increased.

"Your duty to your neighbor is to keep your eye upon him." So said a lady at Wimbledon who was appealing against her assessment. She put in a neat way the practical ethic of the majority of Christians.

William Cowper, the poet, cancelled a passage in his "Expostulation." It was a severe attack on Roman Catholicism, and he seems to have been afraid that it would offend his Roman Catholic friends, the Throckmortons. The passage is given in Mr. Thomas Wright's new volume, entitled *The Unpublished and Uncollected Poems of William Cowper*. It was written apparently in February, 1781. Here it is:—

> Hast thou admitted, with a blind, fond trust,
> The lie that burned my father's bones to dust,
> That, first adjudged them heretics, then sent
> Their souls to heaven and cursed them as they went?
> The lie that Scripture strips of its disguise,
> And execrates above all other lies,
> The lie that claps a lock on mercy's plan,
> And gives the key to yon infirm old man,
> Who once ensconced in apostolic chair
> Is deified, and sits omniscient there;
> The lie that knows no kindred, owns no friend,
> But him that makes its progress his chief end,
> That, having spilt much blood, makes that a boast,
> And canonises him that sheds the most?
> Away with charity that soothes a lie,
> And thrusts the truth with scorn and anger by;
> Shame on the candor and the gracious smile
> Bestowed on them that light the martyr's pile,
> While insolent disdain in frowns expressed
> Attends the tenets that endured the test!
> Grant them the rights of men, and while they cease
> To vex the peace of others grant them peace:
> But trusting bigots whose false zeal has made
> Treachery their duty, thou art self-betrayed.

The *Star* has been denouncing as "filthy" the language of old Dowie, who runs the Zionist movement in America, and holds in his own name all its property. The canny old fellow has been holding forth in London, no doubt with a view to recruiting his party—and his exchequer; and some of his expressions have raised the gorge of our contemporary. But were they, after all, any worse than the language used by Jesus Christ to his religious rivals in Jerusalem? "Fools," "vipers," "whited sepulchres," and "children of hell" take a lot of beating.

What on earth is the blessed Sabbath coming to? Last Sunday morning the Third London Rifle Volunteers assembled at Victoria Station, and, instead of going to church, they went by special train to Epsom Downs, where they drilled by companies and went through manœuvres involving the use of blank ammunition. Shocking, sirs, shocking! Let the clergy rouse themselves and stop this terrible scandal.

We like to see Roman Catholics asserting their political independence in spite of the priests. In the Houghton-le-Spring Division of Durham the Catholic voters, who are two thousand strong, were counselled by their spiritual guides to support the Conservative candidate, who favored an Irish Catholic University. However, they polled almost solid for Mr. Robert Cameron, the Liberal candidate, and thus more than doubled his majority. Perhaps this will be a lesson to the clerical meddlers in future. These gentlemen should go on saving souls, if they can, and let politics alone.

The Catholic Association of London, addressing the Pope at Rome, rejoiced that "in all parts of the British Empire Catholics enjoy the fullest religious liberty, and are treated with the greatest tolerance." Catholics are good at claiming liberty for themselves; bad at conceding it to others. Where the Catholic Church holds sway, as in Spain, there is no more liberty than Protestants and Freethinkers can enforce.

Crowds of people gathered nightly outside St. Mark's Church, Leeds, in order to see a ghost in the churchyard. It was a lady "with golden hair and sparkling eyes." The spectre was first seen by a lad who stated that it was a female sitting on a gravestone, knitting. It appears that the lad did see something, for a woman with a white shawl strayed into the burial ground in a state of intoxication, for which she was arrested, and, as she could not pay the fine, imprisoned. This explanation has been furnished by the police, and now the credit of the ghost is gone, and the neighborhood is at rest. Good old ghost!

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 21, Birmingham Town Hall; 3, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ"; 7, Freethought Demonstration.

October 28, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—October 21, Birmingham; 23, 24, 25, and 28 (Sunday), Glasgow and districts. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

J. PARTRIDGE (Birmingham).—Pleased to hear that the grant from the Secular Society, Limited, will be "of great service" to your Branch, and that you are all doing your best to secure a big success for the special meetings in the Town Hall.

MR. and MRS. CHARLES LEVI (Cincinnati).—Sorry we could not attend the wedding at your house on October 17. This is a case in which distance does *not* lend enchantment. Being present would be ever so much better. Kindly convey to your daughter, whom we had the pleasure of meeting in 1896, our very best wishes for her happiness in the new life she is entering upon.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your valued batches of cuttings.

E. EVELIN.—They don't seem to do much good by praying for you. We have referred the other matter to Miss Vance. We daresay it is all right.

D. FRANKEL.—Glad to see the East London Branch is taking up that work energetically. See paragraph.

S. HOLMAN.—Thanks for your Welsh good wishes on behalf of the Birmingham Demonstration. No doubt it will be a great success. See "Sugar Plums."

J. H. B.—Received. Shall appear.

W. H. NASH.—The question of the Tacitus passage is dealt with fully in Mr. Foote's pamphlet entitled *The Sign of the Cross* (6d.). We advise you to read it.

G. LANGRIDGE is dissatisfied with the response to our Shilling Week appeal. Will the "saints" (he asks) never make a strong and worthy effort for the cause?

G. H. WILLIAMSON.—Acknowledged under the special (original) heading. Thanks. Your suggestion shall be borne in mind.

J. BEAZER.—Much cannot be expected from a working man with a family, but all should do something, however little. Thanks for your good wishes on our own behalf.

W. TIPPER.—Your experience with the Christian anxious after your soul's salvation was amusing. What you say, from experience, of the general honesty and good temper of the Chinese is corroborated by many independent authorities.

J. RALSTON.—We regret the omission. It is included in this week's list.

INQUIRER.—It should be sufficient. If you find your instructions are not attended to, write us again.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—G. H. Williamson, £1; F. Deane, 10s.; G. Thwaites, 10s.; H. Trotman, 10s. 6d.; R. Stevenson, 10s.

E. E. SIMS.—See "Sugar Plums." Glad to hear that the West Ham friends will "add their mite" to the Twentieth Century Fund.

LILIE A. GOYNE.—We hope to see you at Birmingham Town Hall.

HORACE DAWSON.—We will bear in mind your suggestion *re* the *Freethinker*. It was very nice of the chairman and his colleagues to whisper "Atheist" and "contemptible" when you claimed your legal right to affirm. No doubt they are very good Christians. Don't you know the species?

P. CASSIDY.—So it was Darwin who knocked out your Roman Catholicism. He was one of the greatest of human emancipators.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. F. HAMPSON.—Glad to know the Bolton debate was a success.

R. STEVENSON, subscribing to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, says: "We are quite satisfied that the administration of the Fund is right in your hands. Go straight ahead." This correspondent wants to know when he may expect our article on *Richard Feverel*. We can only answer, One of these fine days.

GATESHEAD FRIEND.—Yes, we remember the evening quite well, and pleasurably. We hope to see you again before very long when we visit the Tyneside.

J. BULLOCK and A. F. BULLOCK send their promised subscriptions to the Twentieth Century Fund.

G. WATSON.—See "Acid Drops." There is no end to the audacity of orthodox apologists Lying for the glory of God—and the profit of clericalism—has always been a leading ecclesiastical virtue.

A. ROWLEY.—Pleased to hear that you so "admire" the *Freethinker*. It is always pleasant to be appreciated.

EX-ACOLYTE.—Pleased to hear from you. Our readers will be interested in the following extract from your letter: "When I think that had I not, by some accident, got hold of the *Freethinker*, I might be still going to confession—the dupe of the priests—I almost wish that there was a hell they could fry in. I can't imagine how I was such a fool as to believe their lying rot." But it isn't always a question of folly. It is often a mere question of the mind being turned in the right direction.

RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Lucifer—Leeds Mercury—Torch of Reason—Freidenker—Boston Investigator—Social Review—Conduct—Agnostic Annual (Watts & Co.)—Ethical World—Northern Daily Telegraph—Two Worlds—Blue Grass Blade—Free Society—Huddersfield Chronicle.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE'S lecture on "South Africa and China: A Secularist's Outlook" drew a fine audience to the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. For nearly an hour and a half his address was followed with the closest attention. A few questions were asked at the finish, and were answered apparently to the satisfaction of the meeting.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectures at the Athenæum Hall this evening (October 21), taking for his subject "Life's Great Problems." He has lived long enough to know something about them, and we hope there will be a good audience to hear what he has to say.

Arrangements are completed for the special meetings in the Birmingham Town Hall to-day (Oct. 21), in pursuance of a resolution passed at the N. S. S. Conference on Whit-Sunday. By special request, Mr. Foote will lecture in the afternoon at 3 on "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ," and the chair will be taken by Mr. Charles Watts. From 6 to 7 o'clock there will be an Organ Recital by Mr. C. W. Perkins, the City Organist. At 7 o'clock Mr. Foote will take the chair and initiate the Freethought Demonstration. His own address on this occasion will be supplemented by speeches from Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. C. Cohen, and Mr. H. Percy Ward. The admission will be free all the day, and collections will be taken towards the expenses. No doubt the Birmingham "saints" will do their best to make the collections reasonably liberal.

Advantage is being taken of the presence of so many Freethought speakers in Birmingham to hold some special meetings in favor of Mr. H. Percy Ward's candidature on the "Secular Education" ticket for the local School Board. On Friday evening a meeting is announced to take place at the Somerville-road Board School, Small Heath; on Saturday evening at the Bristol-street Board School; and on Monday evening at the Farm-street Board School, Hockley. Mr. Ward will speak, presumably, at all these meetings. Mr. Watts and Mr. Cohen will speak at one or more, but we are not informed which. Mr. Foote will speak at the Saturday night meeting. His editorial and other duties do not allow of his doing more, much as he hopes for the success of Mr. Ward's candidature.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Watts lectured in Bolton. The audience was not so large as usual, in consequence of the heavy rain that fell during the whole of Sunday. In spite of the weather, however, friends came from Darwen and surrounding places. Next week Mr. Watts will be engaged on missionary work in Scotland.

Mr. Charles Watts held two nights' debate in Bolton last week, upon Spiritualism, with Mr. G. H. Bibbings, editor of *Psyche*. Mr. Watts speaks very highly of his opponent, who

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is an eloquent speaker and gentlemanly in controversy. The large audience listened with commendable impartiality to both disputants. The local papers gave a brief report of the discussion.

The Manchester Branch held its annual meeting on Sunday afternoon. The Committee's report, a copy of which we have received, is slightly pessimistic; but we hope this spirit will soon be banished. Financial support is certainly requisite, and no doubt the members and friends will respond to the Committee's appeal. Mr. Foote has also promised to use his influence in London on behalf of the Branch. He spent some time in consultation with the Committee after his evening lecture in the Secular Hall on October 7. The day's proceedings had been eminently successful, and it was felt that the reaction, from which all advanced movements had suffered during the previous year or so, was apparently coming to an end. A good, prosperous winter season will doubtless set the Manchester Branch well on its legs again. There is certainly no reason to despair, for even now the Branch is very far from being financially bankrupt, and the outlook is distinctly improving. Arrangements will be made as soon as possible for a Freethought Demonstration in Manchester, similar to the one in Birmingham; and this will probably give a fillip to the movement in the whole district.

Mr. C. Cohen had excellent audiences at Pontypridd, friends attending from miles around. A strong desire was expressed to have more Freethought lectures in South Wales. Those who wish to co-operate in bringing this about should communicate with Mr. S. Holman, 5 Jenkin-street, Porth.

The East London N.S.S. Branch is carrying on meetings in conjunction with the Social Democratic Federation on the Mile-end Waste every Sunday morning, in view of the approaching School Board elections. Local Secularists are invited to attend these gatherings, if only to show the general public that there is some real strength behind this agitation. On Monday evening, October 22, a concert and dance will be held at the King's Hall, 85 Commercial-road, in aid of the local "Secular Education" candidate's election fund. The proceedings commence at 8 o'clock, and the tickets are 1s. single and 1s. 6d. double. They can be obtained from D. Frankel, 25 Osborne-street, E. There should be a good gathering.

The Bethnal Green Branch had a good meeting in Victoria Park on Sunday afternoon, and made a fair collection on behalf of the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund.

We have received the *Agnostic Annual* for 1901. It is a Twentieth Century Double Number, price one shilling. We have not had time to look through it carefully, as it only reaches us as we are busy preparing for the press. But we see it contains what must be able articles on many interesting topics by Leslie Stephen, J. Allanson Picton, Joseph McCabe, Charles Watts, F. J. Gould, G. J. Holyoake, and other writers. Mr. Holyoake's article is noticed in our editor's leading article this week.

The West Ham Branch applied for the use of one of the Board school-rooms for Sunday afternoon meetings, but the application was refused. It appears that the school-rooms are only available for Sunday-school purposes. "But why," asked Mr. Majer, "is there any objection to the National Secular Society? I don't see any difference between their meetings and the Sunday-schools in the afternoon. It's a letting all the same." The Chairman, however, said that there was a resolution against it, and the Board passed to the next business. Still, the matter may not end there, for the N.S.S. Branch is approaching the friendly members of the Board with a view to getting the obstructing resolution removed. Meanwhile, Freethought meetings are being held every Thursday evening in the Rock Room of the Workmen's Hall, West Ham-lane, at 8 o'clock.

We are happy to state that the circulation of the *Freethinker* has been slowly, but regularly, expanding since the middle of September. This movement will, no doubt, be continued and accelerated if our friends all over the country will render us a little assistance (1) by inducing their newsagents to put a copy of the *Freethinker* in the window, (2) by getting them to exhibit our weekly contents-sheet, and (3) by persuading them to take a few extra copies for possible sale, and guaranteeing them against loss on copies that remain unsold. There ought to be no need for this guarantee, as the *Freethinker* has always been supplied to the trade on "sale or return." But it seems that some wholesale agents put obstacles in the way of changes by retail newsagents, and we have no means of compelling them to deal with us impartially. A journal like ours has naturally its enemies and ill-wishers. That, however, is a reason why its friends should try to counteract the injury arising from such a cause.

We have received the first number of *Conduct*, a little monthly issued by the South London Ethical Society, and containing articles by F. J. Gould and Professor Earl Barnes. We note also an editorial paragraph on Secular Education, which some of the Ethicists are beginning to see is perhaps "the shortest route to moral instruction." Very much the shortest route; they may depend upon it.

Debate at Bolton.

Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, October 9 and 10, were red-letter days for the Bolton Secularists, and will be long remembered by those who listened to the debate upon the question, "Is Spiritualism True?" between Mr. Charles Watts and Mr. G. H. Bibbings. Despite the heavy rain on the Tuesday night, we had about 500 persons present, and on the Wednesday quite 600 attended. The chairmen were all that could be desired. Mr. Shufflebottom, who took the chair on the first night, acted, as we knew he would, fairly to both sides; and Mr. Chiswell, of Liverpool (Spiritualist), who took the chair at the second night's debate, could not be surpassed. His straightforward manner and fairness manifested themselves from start to finish. Hours before the time of starting on the first night the weather was trying to put a stop to the meeting; but, like all blind forces, it did not know with whom it had to deal, for Spiritualists and Secularists rushed to the hall. A saloon carriage conveyed Mr. Bibbings and a number of his friends from Liverpool. Far away Dundee was represented by our good friend Mr. McLean. The audience behaved splendidly each evening, and both disputants were highly gratified to find that both sides had listened to them from first to last without the slightest interruption.

Mr. Bibbings is a fine and pleasant speaker, with a strong, though rather harsh, voice. He exhibits more of the emotional nature than of the calm reasoner and investigator. He occupied a large portion of his time in giving detailed accounts of what he had seen and what he had been told others had seen at various *séances*. He claimed that that was sufficient evidence to prove the existence of visits from the spirit world.

Mr. Watts, in reply, asked Mr. Bibbings for scientific proof which would satisfy the audience of the alleged manifestations, and invited him to appoint six Spiritualists to represent his side, and he would appoint six to represent the Secularists' side, and they could there and then go into the matter and investigate the alleged spiritual manifestations.

Mr. Bibbings never alluded to this in his reply, and, although Mr. Watts repeated the invitation at the second night's debate, Mr. Bibbings would not accept it, which seems to prove to the Secularists that Mr. Bibbings's repeated remark, "We seek the severest scrutiny and fullest investigation," was hardly correct.

Mr. Watts was in grand form, and several of the audience complimented us on having such a clever debater on our side, saying they had never had such an intellectual treat, and that they would like to hear him again soon.

The discussion was quite a unique experience for Bolton, as there had not been a debate here for over twenty years, and we all felt proud and glad to see that Mr. Watts had lost none of his accustomed ability to deal with a clever opponent. The Spiritualist chairman complimented him after the debate, and said he would on no account miss hearing him when he came to lecture in Liverpool.

All our Freethought friends are delighted with the result of the debate. It has done the Freethought movement in Bolton much good, for it has been the means of showing the Spiritualists what our attitude towards their views really is. Mr. Watts's method of advocacy just pleased them. He was firm without being dogmatic, and gentlemanly while not yielding a single point to his antagonists. He won the applause alike of Secularists and Spiritualists, and the general wish here now is for some Christian representative to meet Mr. Watts in debate. That, we believe, would do us more good than even this encounter. It is only just to say that, in arranging for the debate, and throughout the entire proceedings, the conduct of the Spiritualists was all that could be desired.

James F. Hampson, *Sec.*

In very truth the Bible is a complex collection of most varied documents. They contain much that is admirable and valuable, but also legends, myths, contradictory assertions, accounts expressly falsified to suit later times, mere human fictions, and words spoken in the name of the Lord without there having been any authority for attributing to them such a sacred character. There are writings which merit most reverent treatment, and there are stories no more worthy of respect than the history of Jack and the Beanstalk.—*St. George Mivart.*

Purify thy thought, thinking no evil.—*Pythagoras.*

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A Kingly Philosopher.

"To bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm;
That is the top of sovereignty."—KEATS.

THE antithesis is familiar between the literature of power and the literature of charm—the literature which is a school of life and the literature which is a dream. It has always been the former which has principally claimed the attention of philosophic minds. Without being insensible to the sensuous and imaginative side of literature, they deliberately set this aside as, on the whole, scarcely worthy of a man's best and most serious thoughts. They value the dynamic, not the merely delightful, qualities in literature. Such minds would assign the first place to those who have embalmed great thoughts in literature, and who have pierced to the roots of nature and of life.

Among the chief of those who have given to after ages an immortal ethical work must be mentioned the kingly philosopher, Marcus Aurelius. The waters of thought slip silently away, and it is not a little amazing to realize, upon reflection, that the ideas of this Roman emperor should still have sufficient vitality to fire the hearts and brains of men and women of our own generation. It is a splendid achievement—power over millions of all ages, races, and sympathies. Small wonder that Renan, a writer of nice distinctions, has spoken of the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius in terms of more unmixed eulogy than he has ever bestowed elsewhere.

The old-world philosophers expected much from their rulers. Aristotle and Plato, to name no others, looked forward to an ideal monarch—one who should in his person unite the philosopher with the king. To us, after the lapse of the centuries, their words seem instinct with perfect, if unconscious, irony. Once only in the history of the world these conditions were fulfilled. In Marcus Aurelius we find the philosopher-king, the ruler who preferred the solitude of the student to the splendor of the palace, the general who loved the arts of peace better than the sad glories of war. His was a troubled reign. On the north the Roman Empire was threatened by the hardy German tribes. On the east the "insolent Parthian" was a source of trouble and danger. Marcus was obliged to cope with both these enemies. He himself conducted the campaigns on the Danube. The scant notes in the *Meditations* show how these precious records were composed amid the storm and stress of battle and the elation of victory. It is remarkable how little this turmoil affected the kingly philosopher. What others learn in calm, Marcus Aurelius learnt in tempest. The finest flower of Stoic philosophy was produced to the dread accompaniment of a martial monotone. Far away on the wide Roman marches might be heard the endless, ceaseless sound of beating horses' hoofs and marching feet of men. The barbarians were gathering in multitudes. Who could say what the morrow would bring forth?

Over these wars and rumors of wars hung a shadow, darker and more terrible than battle. Plague had become endemic in the Roman empire. The Mistress of the World was paying a fearful price for victory. The disease brought from Asia by Verus, in 166, had not abated. It had destroyed tens of thousands of the population. It was one of the most terrible calamities which ever fell upon men. From the pestilential East, whence it sprang, this awful plague swept through the empire. From the camps it reached the huts where poor men lay. From the hovels it swept to the lordly residences of the nobility. It did not rest till it reached the imperial purple of the greatest of the Roman sovereigns. Marcus died in the camp alone. "Why weep for me?" were his last words of self-suppression. They were characteristic of this noblest Roman of them all. He was mourned with a note of such true sorrow as never before or since was raised at the death of a king.

The *Meditations*, be it remembered, were never intended for publication. They are simply the Emperor's commonplace book, where he entered his reflections, often quite unconnected, on life and death. The little precious volume was considered for many centuries a literary curiosity. It fitly headed the very brief list of the writings of kings, a class not in any way remarkable for literary genius. The *Meditations* constitute the finest gem of the Stoic philosophy, and proves its author to have been one of the best and greatest of men. Marcus Aurelius was a Rationalist. This life, he tell us, is all that concerns us.

> "Though you were destined to live three thousand, or, if you please, thirty thousand years, yet remember that no man can lose any other life than that which he lives now, neither is he possessed of any other than that which he loses."

Epicurus bade his followers depart from life as a guest from a banquet satisfied with the entertainment. Marcus Aurelius, in sterner language, bids us leave the stage as an actor who has performed his part.

The fundamental religious belief in "god" and "providence" is not beyond question in Marcus's eyes. The passages where he repeats the alternative "either gods or atoms" are too strongly expressed to allow us to think that the antithesis is only a trick of style. His philosophy, be it noted, was Secularistic in that last resort to which men are pushed so often,

With close-lipped Patience for their only friend.

Critics talk of the Greeks as being the teachers of Marcus Aurelius. It is true; but the golden book of the *Meditations*, methinks, could only have been written by a Roman. The strength, the tenderness, the noble humanity, and the monumental resignation—these are the gifts of the lords of human things, the masters of the world. The almost stainless virtue of Marcus Aurelius has been ascribed by Christian theologians to their own bastard faith. It is absolutely certain that Marcus did not derive any of his ethical principles from a wretched religion of which he knew, practically, nothing.

So free from unworthy acts is the life of this greatest Roman Emperor that mentally we place him by the side of Socrates, draining the cup of hemlock among his sorrowing disciples. The life of such a man as Marcus Aurelius remains as a normal high-water mark of the unassisted virtue of man. No one has shown more simply or more completely what men must do and be. Farewell, most noble Emperor! Farewell, thou wise and kindly philosopher! *Ave Atque Vale!*

Not Cæsar dying amid Roman sighs,
By Pompey's statue seems more great than thee.

MIMNERMUS.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

SHILLING WEEK.

SHILLING WEEK, as usual, is running into Shilling Month. I am keeping this sub-fund open, therefore, until the end of October, in order to give every Freethinker a fair and full opportunity of subscribing. Hundreds of Freethinkers, who could afford to send something, have as yet sent nothing. Perhaps they find it too much trouble to get a Postal Order and address an envelope. But this is a very poor excuse, especially in view of all the trouble I am taking in this matter. I invite the "rank and file" of our party to wake up and give a trifle for the good of the cause.

G. W. FOOTE.

Subscriptions received by Tuesday, October 16.

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The Passing of the Creeds.

(Concluded from page 652.)

COMTE'S THREE STAGES.

THE passing of the creeds confirms the French philosopher who pointed out the three periods of the mental development of man. They were the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive periods. The creeds belong to the second. They do not belong to the theological period, for that is more distinctly religious than speculative. All the great prophets have belonged to the first period. Simple, refusing to guess, large-hearted and trustful, they have laid their heads upon the bosom of the infinite mother-earth and lived or died without a fear. Such were Buddha and Jesus and Emerson and Whitman.

There is nothing more to be feared than irresponsible power. To have power, and not have intelligence or honesty to use it right—our peril lies that way. The positive mental attitude is a general inheritance. Thousands of people are swayed by its influence, and do not recognise it. For all such the creed of the Church is a moral injury. There can be no great and just morality without intellectual honesty. If a man temporises with his mind, with his reason, it superinduces a moral condition whereby he can temporise or trifle with the moral sense. We have the conviction that the Church already referred to, that holds one set of doctrines in the pulpit and another set in its pews, without suspecting it or intending it, is a source of dishonesty and immorality. To trifle for selfish purposes, to be compelled to believe something in order to be saved, whether that something is true or not, produces moral confusion.

UNCHRISTIANITY OF CHRISTENDOM.

Many people have speculated about the reason for the unchristianity of modern Christendom. Why is it that the gospel of peace is yet an unknown gospel to the great nations of the earth? Why is it that legislatures and congresses and parliaments are still, at this dawn of the new century, holding secret meetings and examining "soft-nosed shells" that can penetrate any steel armor? What is the reason for irresistible guns, smokeless powder, and huge armies whose genius and spirit is that of destroying human life? Why is it that the great standing armies of the world hold aloft the banner of war with the banner of the cross? Why is it that, as civilisation advances and becomes the possessor of the results of invention, and machinery becomes more wonderful, the burden of life grows daily heavier and heavier upon the back of the toiling millions? It is because the attitude of the Church to the intellect is, and always has been, one of dishonesty. A man cannot lie without vitiating his moral sense, and a lie, if told to save his soul, will vitiate that moral sense just as much as if it were told to injure somebody or selfishly aggrandise himself. A man cannot lie to himself, he cannot lie to the Church, he cannot lie to God for any purpose whatever, without becoming less capable of recognising eternal justice and the eternal right. And from generation to generation the dogmatic creeds have held as necessary to salvation the belief of absolutely unbelievable things, unthinkable propositions, incomprehensible dogmas; and millions upon millions of people, while intending to be honest and sincere, have read the standards and looked at the doctrines, and thought of an angry God, and longed to escape from his wrath, and said: "Yes, we believe." As the inevitable result we have an unchristian Christianity, an un-Christlike humanity. The great accumulators of wealth imagine that it is all right to take advantage of humanity the world over, to extort, to deceive, to rob, and to enrich themselves beyond all measure and all sense if perchance they build a university for a Church or pay off the debt of struggling congregations. I have a fancy that God Almighty cannot be fooled or bribed.

ADVENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL THINKER.

The passing of the creeds issues in the freedom of the mind. Thenceforth it bows to none. It may be mistaken. The individual thinker may err. Then he is responsible for it himself, and the honest man, if he reaches God's throne in any future and finds he has been mistaken, like an honest man, will own he has been mistaken and will not seek to put over on to the Church or the priesthood or the Westminster catechism or upon Christ himself the responsibility of his failure. It is something in this world to be accorded the right to do one's best, and then, if need be, to make an honest failure. The man that thinks and reasons and does not fear is not giving himself any great concern about whether he knows anything about God or not.

The passing of the creeds makes morality imperative; it leaves no longer the hope of heaven at the price of somebody else; it leaves no longer the poor dependence upon a dying God; it inspires a man with a sense of responsibility for his own thought, his own word, his own deeds. It is singularly like the gospel that man Jesus of Nazareth taught. He never said anything about atonement. There never would have been any doctrine of the atonement had it not been that somebody, 200 or 300 years after he left, wrote the Gospel of John. If we were confined to the three first gospels, we never would have any theory of atonement, nor of the fall of man; we would simply have had the doctrine of humanity, "that the pure of heart shall see God," that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and that every man shall be judged according to his deeds.

The passing of the creeds makes life grow earnest and meaningful, makes our responsibility extend to the other man, and requires us to accord to him every right we claim for ourselves. As the creeds pass away, as the theologic Christ becomes impossible, and the theologic God odious and absurd; as the human mind becomes clear and the ideal of morality lifts up its form, commanding and august, the only religion man needs now—justice, fraternity, honesty, and truth—becomes more and more the commanding influence in human life.

J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Echoes from Olympus.

II.—CONCERNING CELESTIAL CLUBS.

EVEN Elysium palls, for, as one may have too much of a good thing, æons of bliss may end in biliousness. That very atrabilious personage, St. Peter—whom we left in the Junior Angelic gnawing the end of a full-flavored cigar, and fuming over the pages of the *Celestial Intelligencer*—suddenly flung the print aside in a new access of ill-temper.

"Infernally dull!" he exclaimed, alluding to the journal. Then he corrected himself. "No, that's a slander on Inferno, where it would be an odd thing, indeed, if they couldn't turn out something brighter and better than this, considering all the talent they have at their disposal—under lock and key, and frizzling in the furnaces."

Yet it was a perfumed sheet of white satin with golden fringe, and letters of shining bronze and artistic headlines in brilliant colors, and, for illustrations, superbly-tinted vignettes.

"Looks well enough," he said somewhat grudgingly. "But where's the news? Angels are not always on the *qui vive*, and cannot be expected to know everything first-hand. But here there's nothing beyond a lot of blatherskitish rubbish about people who are either living *on* the Lord or dying *in* the Lord. There isn't a man among 'em."

"I think it a fairly good paper," ventured Luke with some diffidence. "There are some interesting narratives in it. You *must* admit that, Peter."

"Interesting narratives be —— well, never mind," exclaimed the choleric Peter. "You're not exactly the sort of party to talk about interesting narratives. I wish you and Matthew and Mark and John had been drowned in the sea of Galilee before you thought of writing your Gospels. Don't you know you have lost us some of the best of fellows who, but for you, might have come up here, and infused some light and life and joy into our humdrum existence?"

"Make allowances, Peter," remonstrated Matthew. "We did the best we could with our materials."

"And a fine hash you made of it. I endeavored to put things straight in my Epistles by writing on general matters. Fear God; honor the King; wives be in subjection to your husbands, and so on."

"And didn't you say 'angels bring not railing accusations'?" asked Luke.

"True," said Peter; "but I said railing accusations 'before the Lord,' which is different to talking to a lot of gutter-snipes in a club. Besides, I've changed since then. What I've had to endure has been enough to spoil the temper of any saint. However, to change the subject: what do you

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think of the new feature I've introduced in the *Intelligencer*—the Arrivals?"

"Very good, indeed," said several members, rather pleased to find a point of agreement.

"Yes, I should think so," continued the Apostle. "Here you see the names of all the distinguished people who have crossed the herring-pond to the City of Immortal Life. Look, for instance, at this list of Americans who, having done Europe, have found their way to kingdom-come. Funny thing, the first person Americans ask for on arrival is Shakespeare. Really, I think the principal thing they come for is to see him. One of them, who could not find the Bard the first day he got here, said he guessed he'd go down and have a hunt in the other place. 'Mind you,' I said, 'you can't come back.' He said he didn't want to. He'd seen enough of this one-horse show."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed Matthew.

"Shocking!" said Luke.

"I'm often asked," continued Peter, "for introductions to Chaucer, Milton, Bunyan, and Wesley. All I can say is: 'You'll find 'em roaming about somewhere in the grounds.' Then, soft-like, they say: 'But how shall we know 'em?' 'Get inside with you,' I reply; 'you've got all eternity to do it in, and I've got to mind this gate.' Then they sling their hook."

"Peter," said young Timothy, advancing from a corner of the room. "Do any arrivals ask you if Byron or Shelley or Bobbie Burns is here?"

For answer, Peter reflectively scratched his head with one hand. The other went slily groping down to his sandal. In a moment the sandal was off and flying at Timothy's head.

"The impudence of these kids," remarked Peter to the company generally, "is simply staggering. Paul prescribed for that youth a little wine for his stomach's sake. I'd prescribe something very different to improve his manners. Chaffing his elders, indeed! What is Heaven coming to?"

"Yes," resumed Peter after a pause, "I'm rather proud of that list of distinguished arrivals. But, talking about newspapers, you wait a bit, and we'll have something like a newspaper—an ideal newspaper—when Stead comes up to claim his throne. As for that Topeka crank, I can't stand him at any price. How does *he* know what Jesus would do? It's more than *I* know. And I've been up here a fairish length of time, and knew Him when we were both down in that mud-hole, Judea. It's just what you don't expect our blessed Lord to do that he straightway goes and does. That's *my* experience. And sometimes in consequence there's been hell-up."

"Talking about hell," continued Peter after another pause, during which he had taken many reflective whiffs. "Talking about hell ——"

"S'ssh," mildly expostulated the Angel Gabriel. "We ought not to mention that place up here."

"And why not, pray?" Peter's fiery temper was rising once more.

"Well, you see, Peter, it's rather a delicate matter. You must remember that there are many folks here in heaven who have relatives and connections about whose fate they are not at all certain, and who might, you know—who might, in fact, be down in the place you mention."

"Well, then," said Peter sturdily, "why don't they go down and join 'em?"

"How could they?"

"Easy enough. If they went and kicked one of those belly-eyed tykes about the Throne, they'd soon be chucked."

"Dear, dear me. I'm shocked at you, Peter."

"And I'm disgusted with you, Gabriel. And, now we're talking, I may as well tell you. The other day, when I was at the gate ——"

"Would any gent. like to join in a little game at faro?" The inquiry emanated from the patriarch Jacob, who had come shuffling in from the card-room.

"Where's my sword?" cried Peter. "I'll whip his ear off in two jiffs."

Jacob immediately retired.

"I know—I feel sure of it," said Peter; "this club will be raided one of these fine days. That trickster Jacob is croupier, and already some of the young angels have gone and pawned their golden harps and crowns with Uncle Isaac."

"That reminds me," remarked Gabriel; "I must be off very shortly to lead the Hallelujah chorus."

"Oh, ah; the 'Holy, Holy, Holy' shriek. I know it. Thank God, I'm excused in respect of my bad toe—though, to be sure, I don't howl with that, but rather on account of it. I'm sending a medical certificate myself."

"Indeed. But I thought that just now you were going to tell me something."

"Yes, so I was. It's only a little incident illustrating the cheek of *some* mortals. The other day, a company promoter—director, I think, of the Westralian Wild Cat All-gold Mining Company, and I don't know how many other companies of a similar kind—came to the gate as bold as brass. He said he knew there were two or three items down against him. He understood, however, that the Recording Angel, taking pity on him, had blotted them out with tears. 'Tears be blowed,' I said, and then I looked up your ledger and found his record. 'You infernal villain,' I said; 'there are no tears here. If any tears have been shed, they have been drawn from your victims. Scoot!' But he had me in the end. He said he'd built a church, had been churchwarden for fifteen years, and a Sunday-school teacher still longer. Moreover, he had paid the expenses of the parson's holiday in Switzerland, and had always been an ardent supporter of missions to China."

"Well, and what then?"

"I had to admit him, of course, after that. I ordered him straight off to the bath, and told 'em to give him a good scrubbing, and drown him if they could. Gabriel, my boy, those reputed weeps of yours are doing a devil of a lot of harm."

Gabriel said he would discuss the matter another time, and hastily disappeared.

Peter chuckled to himself. "I thought that would shift him. He's a good sort, but a fearful old molly-coddle."

Still laughing to himself, Peter stretched his legs on another chair, and blew some rings of smoke towards the ceiling. Happening to cast his eyes in the direction of the door, he gave a sudden start. The cigar fell out of his mouth. His jaw instinctively dropped. His eyes opened to their fullest extent. "My God," he exclaimed, "who's this coming?"

As the words escaped him, a grim and ghastly figure stole noiselessly towards him from the door.

With the speed of lightning Peter sprang to his feet, turned round, and darted out of the room by an opposite exit. Two minutes afterwards he burst into the billiard-room, where Michael and Stephen were playing a game of 1,000 up. As he threw himself on a settee, the Apostle emitted a heavy and heart-rending groan.

"What's the matter with you, Peter?" asked Michael.

"I'm ill, Mike; I'm ill!" groaned the Apostle. "I don't know what's coming to this club. We have in heaven nearly all the murderers and villains of the earth who have chosen to repent at the eleventh hour. The place is over-run with scoundrels who weren't considered good enough to be allowed to continue their existence on earth. Most of the best people—philosophers, scientists, poets, wits, reformers—are down in the other place. *We* have most of the scum. But I did think we kept the Junior Angelic a trifle select—that it was a club established by gentlemen for gentlemen. And yet there is *he—he* walking about in the reading-room as if the place belonged to him."

"Who, Peter, who?" inquired the two players simultaneously.

"Why, the Repentant Thief. Go and look at him."

"Phew!" said Michael. "That's so, is it? Well, I suppose we must put up with it. We mustn't be too hard on others, especially if they are, indeed, repentant, nor must we be too self-righteous ourselves."

"I won't stand it, Mike," said Peter vehemently. "I'd sooner resign. I'll go back to the old Angelic."

This he eventually did, and in the parent institution he is as fairly comfortable as he is ever likely to be. He finds his chief source of entertainment in chaffing Moses about Darwin, and in retailing to other patriarchs the latest results of the Higher Criticism. Francis Neale.

Correspondence.

JOSEPHUS AND JESUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Mr. Watts, with his usual incisiveness, gives the arguments against the principal passage of Josephus's writings when he mentions J. C.; and if this was the *only* mention, it might be considered a final refutation. But this passage does not stand alone. Josephus also mentions James as the brother of J. C., and also devotes a chapter to John the Baptist. Both these passages are mentioned by *Origen;* so they are not open to the same objection as the principal passage which mentions Christ. Thus we have *three* allusions to the early history of Christianity in a contemporary history, and Mr. Watts has only disposed of *one*. It would, therefore, appear that the majority is still two to one against Mr. Watts, and it would be interesting to know how he proposes to dispose of the two references I have given: while *they* stand it does not appear much use disproving the third. C. Vaughan.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, Arthur B. Moss, "Life's Great Problems."

Camberwell (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, J. McCabe, "Death and Afterwards."

East London Ethical Society (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, H. Snell, "The Religious Education of Children."

South London Ethical Society, Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road: 7, Herbert Burrows, "The Silences of Life."

Open-air Propaganda.

Station-road (Camberwell): 11.30, A lecture.
Battersea Park Gates: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.
Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture.
Kingsland (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, S. E. Easton.

COUNTRY.

Belfast Ethical Society (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): J. H. Gilliland, A lecture.

Birmingham Branch (Town Hall): 3, G. W. Foote, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ"; 6 to 7, Organ Recital; 7, Freethought Demonstration.

Chatham Secular Society (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, J. W. Cox, "Our Father in Heaven."

Glasgow (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—J. Allan; 6.30, A. G. Nostic, "Fermentation"—with lantern illustrations.

Hull (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Mr. Birks, "The Value of Spiritualism."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Famines in India."

Liverpool (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture.

Manchester Secular Hall (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. Simpson, "War Promoters and their Victims."

Sheffield Secular Society (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Ernest Evans—3, "Biological Problems"; 7, "Science and Morals." Tea at 5.

South Shields (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A Scottish Reading.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—October 21, Birmingham. 28, Athenæum Hall. November 4, Glasgow. 11, Aberdeen.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—October 21, Birmingham; 28, Birmingham. November 4, Manchester. 18, Birmingham. 25, Sheffield. 26 and 27, Debate at Sheffield. December 9, Glasgow.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Old Dowie.

Mr. Alexander Dowie is an old Scotchman, who has long been settled in America, where he bosses the "Christian Catholic Church in Zion," whose headquarters, we believe, are at Chicago. This body is said to possess a great deal of property, which, however, legally belongs to Mr. Dowie. He is, therefore, absolute master of the Church, and is accountable to no one but himself for the expenditure of its revenues. This explains how it is that he travels like a prince, and is able, during his present sojourn in London, to occupy an extensive and luxurious suite of rooms in the fashionable Hotel Russell, at a cost of something like £70 a week. What a satire on the man's pretensions as an apostle of poor Jesus of Nazareth! Nevertheless, there is no particular reason for Englishmen to be enraged at the spectacle. We have a "General" Booth, who really owns all the property of the Salvation Army. We have Archbishops and Bishops who receive from four to fifteen thousand pounds a year for preaching the blessings of poverty, and all the rest of the pathetic nonsense of the Sermon on the Mount. Even such a phenomenon as old Dowie ought not to cause an earthquake or a revolution in England. Why, then, have his meetings been disturbed and broken up? Why has he to be protected from violence by large bodies of police? It can hardly be because he is an American, for Americans are rather popular here than otherwise. It can hardly be because he is a selfish humbug, for we have plenty of home-grown varieties of that species. The solution of the riddle is apparently to be found in the fact that old Dowie's meetings have been disturbed and broken up by medical students. Amongst other things, he is a faith-healer; so that the opposition of the medical students is a kind of professional demonstration. No doubt they think they are prompted by a love of true science, and a hatred of quackery; but outsiders are likely to take a somewhat different view of their proceedings. We venture to suggest to these young gentlemen that the most vital interest of science, as well as of citizenship, is freedom of investigation and discussion. It is for the interest of society, in the long run, that fools and philosophers should have an equal opportunity of being heard if they can. And for two very simple reasons. First, because it is not always easy at the beginning to discriminate between fools and philosophers. Second, because nobody is fit to be entrusted with the power of silencing anybody. Still, a despotism of that kind would be far better than the despotism of a mob, which is generally as devoid of sense as it is of manners, and without any lucid intervals in its irresponsibility. Medical students have no more right than other people to attend Mr. Dowie's meetings except to hear what he has to say. If they do not want to hear him themselves, they have no sort of right to prevent other people from doing so. Common sense might suggest that they are, after all, only playing old Dowie's game for him, by giving him a fine gratuitous advertisement, and enlisting in his behalf the sympathy of a multitude of superstitionists. Moreover, it is not so certain that faith-healing is all humbug. Very likely it is so as professed and practised by old Dowie. But men of gumption know very well that, in nine cases out of ten, it is faith that saves a doctor's patients, rather than his medicines; faith in his skill, faith in his good intentions, faith in his promises of recovery, and practical faith in his directions as to dietary and other observances. The great thing a doctor has to do is to see that common hygienic laws are attended to, and to keep up the patient's spirits—for hope is half the battle. He may do *some* good beyond that, but he knows very well (if he only tells the truth) that it is far from being as much as ignorant people imagine. Surgery has indeed become scientific, but is medicine much less empiric than it was two thousand years ago?

It would be far better if the medical students attended to their own business, and if old Dowie were allowed to attend to *his* business in peace and quiet. No power on earth—or elsewhere, as far as we know—can prevent sharps and flats from coming together. They nose each other a long way off. They draw together as if by gravitation. The sharps enjoy it, and the flats enjoy it.

> Doubtless the pleasure is as great
> Of being cheated as to cheat.

So sang the author of *Hudibras*, and he had studied both species to perfection.

So much for our reflections on old Dowie's case and the conduct of his riotous opponents. And now for a certain moral to be derived from this affair. The Chicago faith-healer is a Christian, and he is visiting a Christian country. Yet he is mobbed and insulted, and would probably be in serious danger if it were not for the police. Now let the reader, with this fact in his mind, just think for a moment of the missionary trouble in China. The apostles of Christianity in the Celestial Empire are all "foreigners." They speak not one, but many outlandish tongues; they represent, too, alien manners and customs; and the religious doctrines they disseminate are hostile to the most sacred beliefs and practices of the native inhabitants. Is it any wonder, then, that the missionaries are detested, and that every now and then the irate Chinese attack the "foreign devils" with a view to clearing them out of the country? Is it astonishing, when Christians mob Christian preachers in England, that Christian missionaries are sometimes mobbed in China? The wonder is, in our opinion, that the Chinese have allowed these Christian "foreign devils" to proselytise so freely and to establish their mission stations in so many parts of the empire.

What would happen if Buddhist missionaries came to England, Scotland, and Wales, and went about ostentatiously trying to convert the inhabitants to a new religious faith? We have not included Ireland, as that country is out of the question. The Catholic priests over there, without lifting their own fingers, would soon see that Buddhist missionaries were as scarce as snakes in the Island of St. Patrick. Perhaps they would not be murdered here—at least not extensively. Civilisation is more firmly established here, for one thing; and, in the second place, there are a vast number of Buddhists, Brahmans, and Mohammedans in the British Empire, owning allegiance to the Queen, so that it would never do to treat their representatives as thieves and assassins. But it is beyond doubt that there would be serious "ructions." Why, it is only a few years since the Liverpool mob howled and threw stones at a few peaceful citizens who, without any active proselytising, tried to worship God quietly in their own way in a modest little mosque in that somewhat cosmopolitan city. From stone-throwing to more murderous violence is only a step, and that step might easily have been taken if it were not for the police and a strong, if not wide, public opinion in favor of toleration.

G. W. Foote.

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Tolstoi and Christ.

The Greek Orthodox Church has done itself no good by its virtual excommunication of Count Leo Tolstoi. Nor did the Romish Church derive any benefit from the ban it placed on the late Dr. St. George Mivart. These ecclesiastical fulminations have ceased to carry with them any of their old-time weight. Nowadays they are laughed at as the weak assumptions of a terrorising power which, happily, no longer exists. They are but the mumblings of toothless, decayed giants, who have taken refuge in wayside caves, from which they impotently snarl at passers-by.

Who cares in the present day whether he is excommunicated or not? The wide heavens are still open to him if he is inclined to continue his worship. Personally and socially he is not one penny the worse. So far from being shunned by his fellows as if he were a leper, his society is courted and his views invited even by members of his aforetime Church. He is regarded as an interesting and welcome novelty in an age of conventionality and commonplace and cant. So the Church gnashes its toothless gums, and the object of its malevolence goes on his way, if not rejoicing, certainly not depressed, and always with an access of popularity.

Ecclesiastical establishments, which at other times find it a comfort to declare that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," apparently fail to perceive that their own attempts at martyrisation are at the best but incubating agencies of heresy. Befogged with theological dogma, and exalted with ideas of their own spiritual importance, they fatuously eject members of their ecclesia, from whom, perhaps more than from others, they have derived honor and distinction. What is still more disastrous to them is that they direct attention to heterodox opinions which otherwise might have failed to command so large a share of public attention. Persecution nowadays means publicity; excommunication is exaltation, and a Church which attempts to be tyrannical must be mad.

The little candle-lights of the Greek Orthodox Church have persuaded themselves that they are suns. Outside their feeble and flickering illumination they imagine that all is darkness. But we live in an age of new illuminants radiating an effulgence of light in which the candles of the "established lanthorns" are completely snuffed out. Tolstoi needs no illumination from the Church. He is a light unto himself. No support or sanction that any body of ecclesiastics could offer is of any value to him.

One of the ironies of religious life presents itself in the fact that this man, rejected of the Greek Church, is imbued with a deeper spirituality than probably any other distinguished thinker of his time. He is an ultra-Christian, who, having studied the doctrines of Christ with the profoundest attention, has given his interpretation of them to the world in all honesty and sincerity, and has, moreover, endeavored to reduce them to practice in his own life's work. He, perhaps more than any other modern interpreter of the teachings of the Nazarene, has perceived and elucidated their natural, direct, and obviously-intended meaning. With him there is no disingenuous desire to explain away their drift and bearing. He recognises their impracticability in the present state of society, and therein is in agreement with Freethinkers, who regard much of the Gospel of Christ as irreconcileable with the laws and conditions of modern life. But he believes that ultimately these teachings will be capable of general acceptance. In regard to that view we are compelled to consider him a visionary. The whole tenor of social life is drifting farther and farther away from the doctrines of Christ as Tolstoi understands them. Nothing short of a complete revolution in the existing state of things—a revolution such as the world has never known, and could hardly dream of, and is not altogether to be desired—would be equal to establishing in practical life the Gospel which Tolstoi holds to be that which was promulgated by Christ.

Tolstoi dismisses as the bold affirmation of an untruth the suggestion that the Christian doctrine is concerned only with the salvation of the individual, and has nothing to do with questions of State. In his work entitled *My Religion* he deals with that point at length :—

> "It is well (so I said); I will resist not evil; I will turn the other cheek in private life; but hither comes the enemy, or here is an oppressed nation, and I am called upon to do my part in the struggle against evil, to go forth and kill. I must decide the question, to serve God or *toku*, to go to war or not to go. Perhaps I am a peasant; I am appointed mayor of a village, a judge, a juryman; I am obliged to take the oath of office, to judge, to condemn. What ought I to do? Again, I must choose between the divine law and the human law. Perhaps I am a monk living in a monastery; the neighboring peasants trespass upon our pasturage, and I am appointed to resist evil, to plead for justice against the wrong-doers. Again I must choose. It is a dilemma from which no man can escape."

Undoubtedly it is a dilemma to all who accept the teaching of Christ and desire to live an active life in the world. It is a difficulty out of which it is impossible for Christians to wriggle with even the smallest shred of consistency. Tolstoi relates, in detail, in the work mentioned above, how it was that all doubt with regard to the true meaning of such words as "Judge not, that ye be not judged" was effaced from his mind, and how he saw their purport to be that Jesus denounced the institution of all human tribunals, of whatever sort; that he meant to say so, and could not have expressed himself otherwise. "When I understood the command 'Resist not evil' in its proper sense, the first thing that occurred to me was that tribunals, instead of conforming to this law, were directly opposed to it, and, indeed, to the entire doctrine; and, therefore, that if Jesus had thought of tribunals at all, he would have condemned them."

He points out that Jesus, from his childhood to his death, was concerned with legal tribunals, and could not, therefore, have overlooked their existence; that Jesus did not admit of an appeal to the justice of men where it was necessary for protection against evil, because he said: "If any man will sue thee at law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also," and when he prayed he besought all men without exception to forgive others that their own trespasses might be forgiven. "So I saw," says Tolstoi, "that, according to the doctrine of Jesus, no Christian judge could pass sentence of condemnation."

Upon this point Tolstoi brings to bear other sayings attributed to Jesus, and supports them by reference to the teachings of the Apostles and the early Fathers of the Church. He says it is plain, therefore, that Jesus's words, "Judge not, condemn not," were "understood by his first disciples as they ought to be understood now in their direct and literal meaning; judge not in courts of justice; take no part in them." Furthermore, he argues that it is impossible to regard these words as meaning simply that one is not to indulge in gossip and evil-speaking.

Tolstoi holds that our entire social fabric is founded upon principles that Jesus reproved, especially in regard to resisting evil. People do not wish to understand Jesus's doctrine in its simple acceptation, and yet they assure themselves that they follow the doctrine; they go through the most elaborate ceremonies for the consummation of the sacraments, the building of temples, the sending out of missionaries, the establishment of priesthoods, but they forget one little detail—the practice of the commandments of Jesus.

With equal honesty Tolstoi deals with the major portion of the Sermon on the Mount, and with other utterances attributed to Jesus.

In regard to Christ's injunction to "Swear not at all," Tolstoi observes that the principal obstacle to a comprehension of the truth that the Gospel forbids all manner of oaths exists in the fact that "our pseudo-Christian commentators themselves, with unexampled audacity, take oath upon the Gospel itself. They make men swear by the Gospel—that is to say, they do just the contrary of what the Gospel commands." Church commentators, not at all awed by the authority of one whom they recognise as God, boldly distort the meaning of Jesus's words; but if, says Tolstoi, we take these words as we would take those of anyone who speaks to us, and admit that he says exactly what he does say, all these profound circumlocutions and evasions would vanish.

Jesus, he holds, was distinctly opposed to war under any circumstances whatever; but our existence is now

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so entirely in contradiction to the doctrine of the Son of Man that only with the greatest difficulty can we realise his meaning. We are so accustomed to speak of a body of men specially organised for murder as a Christian army, we are so accustomed to prayers addressed to Christ for the assurance of victory, that we forget how entirely war is opposed to all his most solemn injunctions.

Whatever else may be said of Tolstoi, we owe to him the clearest, most honest, as well as the most scholarly, interpretation of the doctrines of Jesus which has yet been presented by a follower of the Nazarene. He takes, as we have said, the teachings according to their simple, natural, unsophisticated meaning, and, with an abundance of convincing arguments, he establishes that meaning in face of all the flimsy pretexts by which professing Christians would evade what they find it almost impossible to practise. Tolstoi is not at all concerned to inquire, Is this practicable? before he decides, What does it mean? As a result, he has pinned his faith to doctrines which are certainly not reducible to general practice, as society now exists; which are hardly likely to revolutionise society even at the most distant of conceivable dates, and some of which would not be beneficial to the community at any time, even if they could be carried out. No wonder his honest and indisputable interpretation of the New Testament is noxious to the Greek Orthodox Church. They, in common with other Christians, do not care to have it proved that they are followers of Christ only in name, and that they have wilfully and perversely glossed over his teachings because they cannot accept and practise them under the established conditions of life. Tolstoi's offence is that he has exposed their hypocrisy.

Francis Neale.

The Fallacies of Spiritualism.

To maintain that the claims urged in favor of Spiritualism are fallacious, it is not necessary to impeach the honesty of all its professors. Many of them, no doubt, are sincere; but sincerity is no guarantee of the truth of the belief which is professed. Thousands of the victims of the lowest forms of superstition have been honest in their profession; that fact, however, does not establish the veracity of their belief. I frankly aver my opinion that the majority of Spiritualists are more liberal and progressive in their general ideas than orthodox Christians; still, that does not, in my judgment, rescue Spiritualism from the just charge of its being made up of the most palpable fallacies that pervert the human mind at the present time. I do not refer to the various phenomena which are said to take place at professional *séances*, although much that I have seen at such gatherings appeared to me to be the result of fraud and trickery. Certain it is that I have never witnessed anything which was claimed to be done through spiritualistic agency that in any way convinced me of the existence of any power that was not material. What I take an exception to is the attempted explanation of what are termed "spiritualistic phenomena." I do not believe that spirits of persons—or, as I should term it, the *ego*—survive their death and manifest intelligence when functional activity has ceased, and the material organisation is destroyed. As Professor Huxley says: "The fact remains that, so far as observation and experiment go, they teach us that the psychical phenomena are dependent on the physical." If this be so, the theory of Spiritualism is false, and its fallacies should be evident to minds not captivated by this modern superstition.

I propose now to give my reasons for regarding the claims of Spiritualism as fallacies based upon emotional supremacy. My first allegation is that no one has yet given an intelligible definition of what a spirit is. Supposing it to exist, it is not a known property of matter; and, therefore, being a foreign element, it might prove dangerous by destroying all scientific certainty through interfering with what Professor Tyndall terms "the stability of natural law." Spiritualism must be governed either by natural law—in which case it would be material—or its acts in defiance of that law, which process would be contrary to knowledge and experience. Moreover, spirit, or what is better termed the *ego*, is not an entity separate from the body, but only the co-ordination of nerve-cells, an outcome of cerebral forces. According to modern scientists, the *ego* is not an independent existence which plays on the organs of the brain similar to a musician playing on the keys of a piano. Such an idea has no grounds in science; it belongs purely to the realms of imagination. The fact is that, so far as we know, consciousness does not, and cannot, exist apart from nervous matter. Or as Spencer puts it: "We know nothing whatever of mind, save as exhibited by living beings." He also says: "Between the physical forces and the sensations there exists a correlation like that between the physical forces themselves.....and the one correlation, like the other, is not qualitative only, but quantitative." This view is ably maintained by Haeckel, Huxley, Leslie Stephen, and the French scientist, Ribot; and it has also been thus well expressed by George Henry Lewes:—

> "Without a nervous system there could be nothing like what we know as feeling; without a brain or supreme nervous centre there could be little or nothing of that complex grouping of sensitive states which we know as emotion, thought, and will. But brain and nervous system are only parts of a living organism, and their functions are only specialisations of the general properties of that organism; separate the brain from the vital processes going on throughout the organism, and it is no instrument of consciousness. The Materialist asserts that the brain feels and thinks, as the stomach digests and the lungs breathe. I answer, Yes, but the stomach does not digest, the lungs do not breathe, except when these organs form parts of a living organism. An idea will arrest digestion, a little surplus of carbonic acid will arrest respiration, for the same reason that an arrested secretion will fill the mind with gloom, an excess of carbonic acid will stupefy it, a worm in the intestine will distract it, a plugged artery will obliterate it."*

Such is the scientific view of the subject, and surely it is superior to that of the Spiritualists, whose alleged proof of the truth of their claims rests upon the subjective, which depends upon the abnormal condition of the nervous system. In such a state reason and judgment are deprived of a fair opportunity of exercising their legitimate functions.

Another fallacy of Spiritualism is its teaching that a person can manifest intelligence after life when the activity of the brain has ceased. Now, as scientific investigation has proved that the intellectual faculties, allied with a material organisation, are necessary for the manifestations of intelligence, there is no obvious reason for supposing that in the absence of such organisation, and when the faculties are no longer in operation, any intelligence can be displayed. No truth is more certain than that too much alcohol, or an injury to the brain, impairs, and sometimes destroys, all consciousness and intelligence in man. Is the "spirit" susceptible of the evil influence of the one, and of the disastrous results of the other? If so, of what value is its controlling power? Further, if the body is used as an instrument by the so-called spirit for its operations, which are retarded and often entirely suspended when the brain is diseased, is it reasonable to suppose that these operations will continue when the instrument no longer exists? To postulate intelligence in some other state without living organisms is to assume possession of a miraculous power which Spiritualism does not do. The following scientific testimony, adduced by Dr. T. Cromwell in his work upon *The Soul and a Future Life*, fully corroborates my position, that intelligence and thought depend upon brain power:—

> "Immaterialists have dwelt much on cases of considerable, though always partial, injury to the brain, with which no perceptible mental disorder was associated. But to this there are adequate replies. 'Many instances are on record in which extensive disease has occurred in *one* hemisphere (of the cerebrum) so as almost entirely to destroy it, without any obvious injury to the mental powers, or any interruption of the influence of the mind upon the body. But there is no case on record of any severe lesion of *both* hemispheres, in which morbid phenomena were not evident during life' (Carpenter's *Human Physiology*, p. 775). 'In every instance where there exists any corresponding lesion or disease on *each* side of the brain, there we are sure to find some express injury or impairment of

* *Fortnightly Review*, May, 1876.

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the mental functions' (Sir H. Holland's *Chapters on Mental Physiology*, p. 184). 'There are no cases on record in which the mental faculties have remained undisturbed when the disorganisation has extended to *both* sides of the brain' (Solly on *The Human Brain*, p. 349). Dr. Maudsley, in his *Physiology of Mind*, p. 126, observes that he has come to the assured conviction that mind does not exist in nature apart from brain; all his experience of it is in connection with brain. Lawrence, in his *Lectures on Comparative Anatomy*, p. 112, says: 'I firmly believe that the various forms of insanity, that all the affections comprehended under the general term of mental derangement, are only evidences of cerebral affections, disordered manifestations of those organs whose healthy action produces the phenomena called mental—in short, symptoms of diseased brain.'"

The fallacy of Spiritualism is further shown in the contradictory conjectures of its adherents as to what takes place in the much-talked-of spirit world. If spirits really communicate with the inhabitants of this planet, it is fair to suppose that some actual knowledge should obtain as to the customs observed in this spirit world. But such is not the case, for Spiritualists are not agreed among themselves as to the habits of the departed ones. Some of them assure us that in the spirit sphere the lower animals exist; that clothes are manufactured; that food is eaten, and that the sexual relations are continued; but other Spiritualists deny all these allegations, and assert that spirits of human beings only are to be found in the future state, and that none of the above mundane operations go on.

The absurdity of the spiritual theory appears evident when we consider the vain promises made by persons during their lives to the effect that, if Spiritualism be true, their friends should be assured beyond a doubt that it is so. According to my experience, no such promises have been kept; on the contrary, an unbroken silence has been preserved, although for many years I complied with all the required conditions which were said to be necessary to obtain the information. To say that spirits do appear to those who believe in them does not remove the difficulty, because such appearances cannot afford any evidence of the truth of Spiritualism to those who do not witness them. Neither does it remove the dilemma to urge that antagonistic minds prevent the manifestations. During years of honest inquiry I was in no way antagonistic. But supposing I was "a disturbing element," if "the spirits know all mortal consequents" they were aware that my desire was to learn the truth, and they would, therefore, have known that their appearance would have convinced me of my error, and established at least some of the claims of Spiritualism. It is no answer to say that some spirits lack the power to appear, for the very persons who pledged their word to make themselves known to me are said to have frequently visited certain believers in Spiritualism. Besides, where it is alleged that such men as Shakespeare, Thomas Paine, and Colonel Ingersoll have returned to "say a few words," they are made to utter nonsense that in life they would have been ashamed of. The truth is, a living dead man is a contradiction, and we have yet to learn that one instance can be verified of the perpetual continuation of one living individual. A body in action must be present somewhere, but when it has disappeared in the grave and gone to dust it is no longer an organised body. In other words, a body, if it acts, must act where it is or where it is not. It cannot act where it is, in the grave, for there its functions have ceased; it cannot act elsewhere, because it is not there to act. This appears as self-evident as that the whole is greater than the part.

Charles Watts.

(To be concluded.)

English Missions in India.

(Continued from page 660.)

In my last article I pointed out that a great many of the cases of conversion recorded were not genuine, in the sense of being gains from the non-Christian population, but were simply captures from other missions. From this it follows that a man, getting converted first at one mission, then at another, and so on, may swell the number of conversions indefinitely without at all increasing the number of the native Christian population. That this is not an exaggeration the following quotations will show conclusively.

The Baptist report for 1896 says: "Among other discouragements under which our missionaries in Bengal have labored, our Barisal brethren have been greatly distressed by the action of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel." Again: "Like other stations of our Society in Bengal, the Church at Soory has suffered greatly by the drain upon her that has been made by the several adjoining missions. Mention might be made in particular of the Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Society, and the American Episcopal Methodist Society." From time to time the Salvation Army has published accounts of the huge number of converts made in India. In 1887 a Mr. Gillespie, of the Irish Presbyterian Mission, published a pamphlet in which he declared that the Army's statistics are purely imaginary, while the agents employed are "men of evil reputation, and the native Christians who join the Army suffer both spiritually and materially from the change." In Bareja Mr. Booth Tucker reported twenty-five families at work on the farm colony. Mr. Gillespie says that, instead of twenty-five families, there is only one. In Jugerat the Army claimed 75,000 adherents and 10,000 enrolled adult "soldiers." Mr. Gillespie challenges them to produce 100 genuine converts. Finally, in the Taneh Mahala, where about 3,000 are said to be on the rolls, Mr. Gillespie failed to find a single one after the most diligent inquiry.

The Church Missionary Society also falls foul of the Army, and asserts that whatever following it has in India is drawn from the Christian, and not from the non-Christian, population. The report adds that the native agents employed by the Army "are such as it is impossible to respect," and states that there is no evidence to show that "one heathen or Mohammedan has ever been brought by Salvation Army effort to professing in his home his adhesion even to unbaptised Christianity" (Report, 1896; p. 216). The report for the current year asserts, further, that at Kangaya, Travancore, the Army enticed away nearly half the congregation (p. 324); and, of course, these reach the British public as genuine converts from "heathenism." The Roman Catholics also receive their share of blame. In one place they are accused of stealing over 400 families belonging to the Christian Missionary Society; in another, of undermining the work of Protestant associations (Church Missionary Society Report, 1896; pp. 323, 344). Needless to say, the Roman Catholics return the charge, and accuse Protestants of stealing *their* converts. The London Missionary Society, in its current report (pp. 99, 232-3), also complains of the rivalry of Mormons, Catholics, and Seventh-day Adventists. In brief, each one of the societies accuses all the others of stealing converts already made, and palming them off on the people at home as cases of genuine conversion.

I have no intention of entering into any estimate as to which of these charges are true—they are probably all well founded—but quote them merely to show the utter unreliability of missionary returns. After reading these charges and counter-charges, it becomes plain that, in a large number of instances, these so-called converts are not converts at all. They are professionals who visit mission after mission, getting all they can at each, and ranking as a new convert in a score of different reports. No announcement is made in a single one of the reports that a large percentage of their new members belonged to other Churches before joining theirs; the public is carefully encouraged to believe that they are conversions from the non-Christian population. It is evident that, poor as the returns are as they stand, if we allowed for the new births among Christians already converted, the number who are converted one week and lapse the next, and those who are simply captured from the missions, the number of *genuine* converts would sink to microscopic proportion. If raising nearly one million and a-half sterling annually on the strength of such figures as those quoted above is not obtaining money under false pretences, it comes so near that it takes a missionary society to detect the difference.

In addition to the direct attack made upon non-Christian religions in India by propaganda, there is an indirect attack made through the agencies of schools

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medical missions, and the like. That these latter agencies are productive of some good there can be no doubt; but, as they are all maintained for their value as instruments in the work of evangelisation, their worth has to be finally estimated in terms of their success in this direction. The Church Missionary Society's report asserts that the educational work in India continues "to demonstrate its usefulness as an evangelistic agency" (p. 347), and in various parts of the report the same opinion is expressed concerning the medical missions. The position of affairs in India in matters of education, it is worth noting, seems pretty much as in England, the religious schools running in open rivalry to the Government institutions, which they seek to supplant. Thus, the Church Missionary Society's report expresses "The great need for missionary schools that are capable of holding their own with the well-equipped Government institutions" (p. 252). The London Missionary Society reports that at Tresandrum more than 150 girls have left "mission schools to secure a higher standard of education in Government institutions—a fact which we very deeply deplore." The last phrase shows pretty clearly how very real is their solicitude for the educational welfare of the people; it also shows the real object in keeping mission schools going.

What, then, is the value of these schools as instruments of conversion? None of the societies give the least information on the subject, except indirectly. We are left to find out as we may. We shall, however, get some indication of their value if we compare the number of scholars with the number of reported cases of conversion. In 1896 the number of scholars in Church Missionary Society schools in India reached the figure of 52,004. But, as the increase in the number of communicants from all quarters between 1896 and 1900 was only 3,631, and as the reports of the various missionaries attribute almost the whole of the conversions to the influence of *their* preaching, it is difficult to see in what way these schools "demonstrate their usefulness as evangelistic agencies." The fact is that but very few of the people who pass through mission schools in India ever become members of any Church. Two or three sentences from the Church Missionary Society report will show this much. At Bannu, Punjab, out of 340 scholars two were baptised (pp. 262-3). At Karachi the conversion of one boy out of 476 scholars is described as a "noteworthy event" (p. 272). At Amritsar among 691 scholars there were "no baptisms" (p. 252). The London Missionary Society had in India, four years ago, 33,184 scholars; since then the net increase from all quarters has been 1,189. The Baptists register 6,000 scholars. In 1898 they gained 52 converts; in 1899 they *lost* 16.

Where, then, are the glorious results that we are assured flow from this educational work? Certainly they are not evident in the published returns; and it is not unfair to assume that, as they are not mentioned, they are not in existence. The truth is that, while the Hindoo is quite willing to avail himself of the opportunities for a good secular education, he definitely turns his back on the religious instruction. The case reported on page 17 of the Church Missionary Society report, of a man who had no objection to his son becoming a Christian, because "I have noticed Christians are coming to the front, and I want my son to come to the front," is typical of a large class. One may place at the side of the empty assurances of interested parties the explicit declaration of Mr. W. S. Caine, M.P., on his return from India in 1889, that "educated India is looking for a religion, but turns its back on Christ and his teaching as presented by the missionary.....As far as turning the young men they educate into Christians is concerned, their [the missionaries'] failure is complete and unmistakable."*

I have said enough in what has gone before concerning the quantity of converts gained. What of the quality? That this is poor is admitted on all hands; the failure of the missionaries to twist the higher-class Hindoos is notorious. I could quote plenty of evidence to prove this from outside sources. I prefer, however, to take their own testimony as being indisputable. The Church Missionary Society Report says that the Bengali Christian Church displays "a low ideal of Christian possibility and attainment fatal to real aggression and usefulness" (p. 191). In South India, to the query, "What is the character of these converts?" the reply is that, "while year by year there is a distinct growth in spirituality, yet at present there is a rather low standard of Christian living" (p. 301). The evangelisation of the heathen, we are informed (p. 286), depends ultimately upon the native agents. Yet of these the Rev. J. Stone writes: "What has saddened me.....has been the ignorance of some of the agents, and the almost utter lack of earnestness in others in their work" (p. 307). The Rev. T. Walker writes that, while "to the superficial observer all seems fair and hopeful," yet the state of things in South India is much like a certain sensitive plant, which, presenting a fair picture to the eye, yet, "if you touch it, the flowers decay and the leaves curl up into a shapeless skeleton.....Much that is fair to all appearance shrivels at the touch of truth" (p. 319). Mr. Walker's career as a missionary bids fair to come to an abrupt conclusion if he continues in this strain. Concerning another district, the report dwells upon the enthusiasm with which the missionary was received. The whole village was waiting for him. "The people had heard of me beforehand," goes on this guileless preacher, "and would not rest until I had sent back to Manikaru for *medicine chest and magic lantern*" (p. 266). So that the enthusiasm was, after all, for free medicine and a magic lantern entertainment, not for the Gospel. There were no converts.

The London Missionary Society refers sorrowfully to the fact that its efforts meet with little success among the high-caste Hindoos (1896 Report, p. 113). And in the Report for 1900: "Our people are gathered together from the lower-castes," but subscribers are implored not to "despise the low ideas and motives with which they come to us" (p. 186). Again: "A very large proportion of those who profess themselves Christians, and are baptised, are so very ignorant that great care and patience are required to make them intelligently acquainted with the fundamental truths of Christianity" (p. 145). That is, they convert them first, and explain what the religion is afterwards. At Salam "certain of the Church members have had to be severely disciplined" (p. 157). At Myanadu the Church "might be one of the most influential Churches in Travancore. But its spiritual power is gone." The members "frequently spend their leisure time in quarrelling among themselves. Aggressive Christian work is impossible. The past year has witnessed a long series of unhappy quarrels in the Church" (p. 188). At Trevandrum only a third of the Christians can read (p. 190). Among the Malu Christians, "When one questions them by themselves, the one appalling factor that forces itself upon one is their unimaginable ignorance. In most, the anxiety for their daily bread is the largely bulking factor in their consciousness" (p. 137).

It is needless to multiply quotations of this character. One might go on indefinitely, and add to these admissions the opinions of outsiders. I have preferred to take their own statements, and I repeat that, however one may feel inclined to question the general accuracy of missionary reports, it may be taken for granted that things are not *better* than they are represented. Yet, taking their own statements, three societies alone spent in India in twelve months £140,000, in round figures, maintained 5,820 missionaries, and converted (?) 2,136 individuals, that number including at least fifty per cent. of children. And of this number the confession is made that they exhibit "unimaginable ignorance," and display "a low ideal of Christian possibility and attainment fatal to real aggression and usefulness." Verily, there are few combinations of stupidity and knavery that can hold a candle to Foreign Missionary enterprise.

C. Cohen.

* *Birmingham Daily Post*, February 14, 1889.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing him against copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

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Acid Drops.

St. Luke, according to Christian tradition, was a member of the medical profession. For this reason a Guild of St. Luke, composed of doctors, has been organised in connection with the Church of England. Once a year, on St. Luke's Eve, this body assembles at St. Paul's Cathedral, to take part in a religious service and hear a sermon. There are 800 members; but 1,000 doctors in all, together with a considerable number of their friends, congregated under the great dome on Wednesday evening, October 17. The Bishop of Rochester's sermon, if we may judge by the scanty report in the newspapers, was a so-so affair, calling for no particular comment. But the collection hymn was really funny. Here is one verse of it:—

O! how glorious and resplendent,
Fragile body, shalt thou be
When endued with so much beauty.
Full of health and strong and free,
Full of vigor, full of pleasure,
Thou shalt last eternally.

This is dreadfully poor stuff as poetry, and the penultimate line is more Pagan than Christian; in fact, it might very well be sung by a Mohammedan with his mind's eye on the seventy-two delicious houris awaiting his embraces in Paradise. And the science is about on a level with the poetry. Many of those thousand doctors must have smiled (inwardly) at the idea of a body lasting for ever. They know very well that perpetual motion belongs to the universe as a whole, and not to any part of it considered separately. But we daresay they have excellent reasons for countenancing in St. Paul's Cathedral what they would treat with uproarious laughter in their private sanctums.

While poor John Chinaman is being freely blackguarded as well as knocked about by the allied Christian Powers of Europe and America, it is pleasant to find someone who has a good word to say for him. Mr. J. H. Gwyther, chairman of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia, and China, addressing a general meeting of shareholders at Cannon-street Hotel quite recently, said that "the bank had had very extensive dealings with Chinese traders, and had always found them reliable and honest. By their integrity and solvency they had shown a bright example to other mercantile communities."

We were talking the other day with the captain of a big merchant ship. He had traded in all parts of the world, and he was loud in praise of the honesty of the Chinese merchants. He said he had never found a rogue amongst them, though he had found plenty elsewhere, and the worst of all in Christian countries. The word of a Chinese dealer, he said, was as good as his bond, and you might almost dispense with any other security.

We send Christian missionaries to China, but it looks as though the Chinese should send some Moral missionaries over to Europe, and England ought not to be forgotten.

Wonderful, indeed, are the accounts now given of the gentle and conciliatory spirit in which Christian missionaries have always approached the Heathen Chinee. Of course, we believe them. How could we entertain any doubt when we read such a letter as the following, which was addressed by a Protestant missionary to the Commander of H. M. *Porpoise*, and published by Admiral Richards (China, Blue Book, No. 1, 1892): "What is the use of sending our men-of-war to ports like Wuhu, with only a small official? Why not bring a few gunboats to Nan-king, and order the Viceroy to stop the nonsense in his district, with the alternative of a bombardment?"

That's the way to spread the gospel of the "meek and lowly one" amongst the heathen. Of course, it may lead to trouble, but that's where the fun comes in. Mr. C. T. Studd, an active missionary of the stand-no-nonsense sort, addressing a meeting of the Church Missionary Society, and pleading for the conversion of the heathen, is reported in the *Times* of December 4, 1895, to have said "he thought he could speak in the name of sport, and he could assure his hearers that the sport of preaching the Gospel to the heathen excelled the sports of cricket, football, shooting, or any other sport." Beats cock-fighting, in fact, according to this rollicking saver of souls.

The *Church Times* lifts up its head and wails at the "cynical and cruel crusade" against foreign missions. It is, however, obliged to admit that the methods of mission work in China are "not beyond criticism." And it tries to console itself with the reflection that "one good result of the present distress may be a reconsideration of the whole question of methods, a more thoughtful adaptation of means to the end."

Then it goes on to hope that the whole question of women's work in the interior of China may be reconsidered. It suggests that in this matter due prudence has not been exercised. "And it will be well if, in future, we pay greater attention to the intellectual capability of those who are sent upon the China missions." It says that for a long time it was thought that anyone would do for the Indian missions, but the idea has been dispelled. "In China that lesson has yet to be learned. Face to face with an ancient civilisation, with a people of marked intellectual power, with a social system dominated by *literati*, we have too often been content to send those who have no marked qualification for the special work."

Now doesn't all this go to show that the criticism the *Church Times* complains of has been deserved? Should we have heard anything about these deficiencies and need of reform if Lord Salisbury and the press had not spoken out? There would then have been but one side to the Chinese missionary trouble.

It is stated in the newspapers—we do not know whether it is true or not—that a book which was used all day for swearing purposes in a well-known London police-court turned out on examination to be a *Guide to the Law of Landlord and Tenant*. We daresay as much truth was told as usual—and the same number of lies.

The Rev. Dr. Clifford is "astonished" to find in the organ of the Salvation Army a direction from its General that its members should abstain from exercising their influence and votes as electors. How strange! Dr. Clifford is a friend of General Booth, and has publicly advocated the claims of his Social Wing. Yet he appears to have been ignorant all the time of the fact that abstention from politics is one of the Salvation Army regulations. General Booth plainly and honestly tells his soldiers, in good Bible language, that they are *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Here they are merely pilgrims; the place of their citizenship lies beyond death. And herein General Booth is a true New Testament Christian. It is not he, but Dr. Clifford, that has "fallen from grace."

Dr. Clifford advised all Salvationists who had votes to revolt against the General's advice. This was received with "cheers." But it was Baptists who did the cheering. The Salvationists will obey their own General, and not one of the leaders of another denomination.

A Chicago religious journal, the *Advance*, calls upon Birmingham to give up the trade of manufacturing idols for China and other "heathen" countries. The writer of the article says that he visited a factory in that city and saw a very fine and large assortment of gods. Some were gods of war, breathing fire and slaughter; others were gods of peace, beaming with good-fellowship. The "heathen" paid their money and took their choice. It made no difference to Birmingham.

We don't quite see why this easy and lucrative business should be abandoned. It is quite right and proper, of course, to send out missionaries to convert the "heathen" to Christianity. But the job cannot be done in a minute; while it is going on the poor benighted ones must have gods from somewhere; and why shouldn't the missionaries' friends supply the god-market during the interval? They can give a bit to maintain the missionaries, and thus the "heathen" are partially paying for their own conversion. What on earth could be better than that?

In an infantry regiment now in India (2nd Welsh Regiment) the married women are required to attend church. If they absent themselves, their husbands are punished. This is rather rough on Tommy Atkins. Suppose there is a little domestic tiff; all that Mrs. Atkins need do in order to get her husband into hot water is to stay away from church. In such an eventuality, the unfortunate Atkins may be expected to view both the church and the partner of his joys and sorrows with feelings which, temporarily at any rate, are not akin to love. The arrogant clerical martinet, by whom, of course, the regulation is instigated, probably thinks he is advancing the interests of his Church.

All officers attending divine service in Portsmouth Dockyard Church in uniform are to wear swords. Such is the order of Admiral Sir C. F. Hotham, the new Naval Commander-in-Chief. No doubt the order has been duly countersigned by God Almighty. Otherwise one might be tempted to quote the text about those who take the sword perishing with it. But even then we might be floored with the opposite text about those who had no sword selling their clothes to buy one. Such an *olla podrida* is the Bible!

The *Times* printed the other day the following advertisement: "A DVOWSON, within three miles of Charing Cross.

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Moderate High Church views. Well-to-do parishioners (3,000). Further particulars from," etc. What have the 3,000 "well-to-do" parishioners to say to this monetary transfer of the care of their precious "souls"? The chief attractions presented seem to be that the happy purchaser will be free from contact with low-class, beggarly folk, and that the offertories are likely to be handsome.

"A great many people sleep between these walls," said the guide, showing the visitor through the ancient English church where the noble families were interred. "Just the same way over in our country," replied the Continental visitor. "Why don't they get a better preacher?"

A letter appears in the *Church Times* on the subject of housing the poor. The writer says: "Of course, as Christian citizens we must help on all movements designed to put an end to darkness and cruel habitations; but that we should probably do almost as well if we were Agnostics. What the Agnostics cannot do, and we can do, is to bring pressure to bear on the consciences of Christian slum-lords (mostly not in the peerage), High Church slum-ladies, budding land-grabbers at Eton and Harrow, members of the Bible-class who own 'Rents,' communicants who have gained seats on the town council, churchwardens who are jerry-builders, and such-like. Now, this is surely spiritual work—spiritual enough to satisfy the extremest opponents of 'Christian Socialism.'"

Filthy-minded clerics who wish to introduce the Romish Confessional into the Church of England seem to be carrying on their little game in various parts of the country. The Rev. C. A. Pugh, rector of Ashton-under-Lyne, for instance, has been detected circulating a book entitled *An Aid to Repentance* to young girls attending his church. The book contains questions of a highly improper nature, and the rev. gent. has received a castigation in the *Ashton Reporter*.

Some anonymous lunatic has written to the *Church Gazette* declaring that if the "gigantic fraud of the Higher Criticism craze is in future to be advertised at our Church Congresses, the sooner they come to an end the better." He fully justifies our description of him as a lunatic, for he says: "Our Church and country are deluged with popery and infidelity, which sufficiently accounts for the hand of God having been so heavy upon us for the last twelve months in the recent terrible war—for war is one of the four sore judgments of God."

Even bishops are beginning to express their dissatisfaction with that annual outpouring of clerical twaddle yclept the Church Congress. At the recent Worcester Diocesan Conference the Bishop of Worcester was moved to say: "It had to be confessed that Church Congresses no longer excited the interest they once did; they were certainly waxing old, if they were not ready to vanish away."

A week or two ago we drew attention to the fact that Dr. Conan Doyle had been included in the *Tablet's* list of Catholic novelists. We said that we believed he was a bit of a Freethinker. Since then Dr. Conan Doyle has written to a Scottish newspaper on the subject. "I am not," he says, "and never have been since my school days, a Roman Catholic. For more than twenty years my strongest convictions have been in favor of complete liberty of conscience, and I regard hard and fast dogma of every kind as an unjustifiable and essentially irreligious thing, putting assertion in the place of reason, and giving rise to more contention, bitterness, and want of charity than any other influence in human affairs." Dr. Doyle states that the church which he attends in London is that of Mr. Voysey, who, as most of our readers will recollect, is a Theist, but a resolute opponent of orthodox Christianity. "It will be obvious," Dr. Doyle says, "that my religious views are broadly tolerant, founded upon a reverent Theism, rather than upon the special teachings of any particular sect."

Poison in the sacramental cup. The *Lancet* has again been calling attention to the danger of infection through the use of the common chalice in the Communion service. Ecclesiastical authorities are urged by that journal to consider the matter "without delay." Dear, dear; and to think that we should never have found out the danger till the present day! Who knows how many may not, in all the past centuries of the Christian era, have contracted by this means foul disease or malignant fever, and perhaps have died of it?

But what about the Heavenly Father? Surely he might protect us when we solemnly and symbolically drink his Son's blood. Or the Son himself might be reasonably expected to see that all is safe in this rite instituted by himself. Out upon a god who takes so little care of his creatures when they are engaged in the chief ceremony of his faith. Various expedients are suggested as a protection against the possible dangers of the Holy Cup. The best one, of course, is to leave it alone altogether. Something should be done, for even in a pub. you are provided with a clean glass.

I see, says a writer in the *Sunday Sun*, that Archdeacon Sinclair dedicates his new book, *Unto You, Young Men*, to the undergraduates in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, in the hope of helping them to Christian faith and practice. The latter portion of this charitable hope will doubtless be appreciated by the medical students. "I have been desirous," says the Archdeacon in his preface, "of putting something together that may help to settle the young men of the present day in the faith of Christ and in the Christian life." This is very good of the Archdeacon, but the undergraduate, as I know him, rather resents being preached at, even in his own college chapel. Some of the chapters are on the Meaning of Life, Chivalry, Courtesy, Amusement, and the Future. Possibly on some of these the undergraduate could give any author points.

So the Bishop of Worcester wears his gaiters, and we presume his shovel hat, to foster in others a "reverence for the past." Well, we know that when dignitaries thus attired are seen trotting along the street they mostly occasion a feeling of merriment in irreverent minds. But may not the Bishop's plea for ancient habiliments lead him further than he is disposed to go? Why not apparel himself according to the fashion-plates of Judea, or go back to the simplicity of the Genesaic fig-leaf?

Whether jesting or not, the Bishop has rather given himself away to the watchful *Christian World*, which asks whether this clinging to the discarded habiliments of a bygone age is not a symbol of more than meets the eye—"of an ecclesiastical temper and frame of mind which is equally reluctant to let go ancient and outworn things in matters of thought and creed and worship and rite?"

The Bishop of Bath and Wells opened the other day an exhibition at Taunton designed to "stimulate interest in missionary work." It would seem just now that a good deal of "stimulant" is needed to pull that enterprise together. Hogsheads of the holy spirit wouldn't do it. As to the heathen, we have already "stimulated" them pretty well with bad whisky and rum.

"French novel readers"—writes the Paris correspondent of the *Church*—"will have to practise a little extra economy if they are to continue to indulge in their favorite pastime. The price of 'yellow-backs,' which has already advanced twenty-five centimes, still displays an upward tendency." We always wondered, says the *Topical Times*, who consumed the enormous annual import of naughty French novels. Evidently the secret sinner is the fair English curate, the guileless Robert Spalding of the village damsel's dream. But fancy the *Church* newspaper keeping a man in Paris to report the movements of the market in the literature of the petticoat! How Silvestre and the rest of the makers of Boulevard pot-boilers will smile when they learn the heart of the mystery thus given away by our clerical friend!

A Birmingham man named Keane evidently troubled himself more about Christ than Christ troubled about him. In a fit of religious mania he cut his throat.

Some young Sawbones, with more combativeness than sense, kicked up a rumpus at a lecture in London on "Faith healing" by Dr. Dowie, the founder of the "Christian Catholic Church in Zion." This is exactly what the downy Dowie wanted. The police-court proceedings have given him an excellent gratuitous advertisement.

A curious survival of pagan superstition is stated to exist in a forest of the district of Morbilian, in Brittany. There stands a gigantic black stone figure of a woman called the "Black Venus," to which the superstitious Bretons make offerings with prayers that it will bless their crops. Twice the stone was cast into the sea by people who hoped to put an end to the idolatry, but twice the peasants dragged it back and set up an altar before it. Count Pierre de Lannion about two centuries ago conveyed it by forty yoke of oxen to his own chateau and set it up in the courtyard. The Count and his chateau are both gone, but the "Black Venus" still remains standing in the forest, overgrown with moss, and is still prayed to by the peasants, who derive exactly the same assistance from it as if they addressed their appeals to Heaven.

The proposal of the Parks Committee of the London County Council to prohibit the playing of games on Sundays at Hackney Marsh is attributable solely to a petty Puritanical spirit, whatever the ostensible reason given. There is at least one concession that Sabbatarians make to the spirit of the age. They always endeavor to disguise their real motive

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under some flimsy pretext or other. They know that the "sanctity" cant stinks in the nostrils of most of their hearers.

Dr. Chadwick, Bishop of Derry, is very irate over Marie Corelli's *Master Christian*. He thinks he is justified in protesting when he reads that the inquirer finds "at every step some amazing hypocrisy—some deed of darkness and bigotry and cruelty" (p. 270) among the English clergy; and that the words "full of hypocrisy and iniquity" apply fittingly to "more than half of the preachers of the Gospel at the present day" (p. 183), and that they are "fulfilling the words of the Lord—'full of extortion and excess'" (p. 243); and when we are told that a respectable clergyman promises heaven to the millionaire "on account of the money he has left to the Church in his will" (p. 281).

The clerical critic spots one misquotation of Scripture by Marie Corelli. Christ said "Sell that thou hast," but it is always printed in the novel "Sell half"! (pp. 85, 283, 311, etc.). The Bishop scores one in regard to the exact form of the injunction; but Marie Corelli could get more than her own back by pointing out that the Bishop himself carefully refrains from *obeying* the injunction, whichever way it is put.

The Revised Version of the Bible was published in America almost simultaneously with the Autobiography of General Grant, and it appeared from the respective sales of the two books that the great soldier was a more popular author than the Holy Ghost. We now read that the sale of the Bible is steadily declining in America. The American Bible Society confesses that it is sending out 400,000 less Bibles and Testaments than it sent out five years ago. In fact, the Society is contemplating the sale of its premises, and the transfer of its business to a cheaper position.

The late Marquis of Bute enjoined in his will that his heart should be taken to Jerusalem, and there buried in holy earth. The *Outlook* thinks that this illustrates the ideal side of his character. We should substitute "superstitious" for "ideal." No doubt the Catholic nobleman fancied there was something sacred in the very soil of Palestine. Perhaps he imagined that his heart would act as the centre of the reassembly of his bodily parts at the general resurrection, and that he would stand a good chance at Jerusalem of being in the first batch of spectators of the second advent of Jesus Christ.

James Menzies was charged at the South Shields Police-court with the awful crime of selling newspapers on a Sunday morning, and actually asking people to buy them. The police swore that he called out the name of a paper within twenty yards of a place of worship. But the magistrates did not appear to believe them, and the case was dismissed. The defendant affirmed instead of swearing. This fact may throw some light on why he was singled out for prosecution.

We have received a copy of the First Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Protestant Laymen's Association, which seems to be run by a little clique of "anti-infidels." The total income is £23 11s. 2½d., and the expenditure £23 11s. 1½d. This leaves a balance of a penny to go on with. The work of the Association consists principally in denouncing Roman Catholicism and calling on nobody in particular to "put down" the "immoral propaganda" of the National Secular Society. We don't suppose, however, that the Roman Catholic Church is frightened. Even the N. S. S. will hardly be terrorised by that penny.

The *Sunday Companion* publishes a very eulogistic notice of "Mr. Humphreys," who keeps a bookshop in the vicinity of Paternoster Row, and sticks pious notices outside, which have been the means of bringing many young men to God. This "Mr. Humphreys" is the fellow who behaved in such a ruffianly and disgusting manner to the N. S. S. secretary at the old office in the Strand. The portrait of him in the *Sunday Companion* is quite characteristic.

Men of God are sometimes full of enterprise. The Rev. F. H. Law, for instance, who had been rector of St. Margaret's, Lee, since 1873, recently resigned that living on account of failing health. Soon afterwards he married a maiden lady of Blackheath. We suppose it was a motion of the spirit, a call from the Lord.

Rev. Newton Ebenezer Howe, vicar of Swindon, has been committed for trial on a charge of obtaining money by false pretences. The only consoling text we can suggest is that the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth.

Club Life has a story called "Heaven: Up to Date." It narrates the experiences of a good man who died and went to that establishment. But he couldn't stand the company of the converted scoundrels he met there, and St. Peter had to let him out again, although he was told there was no readmission.

"Chestnuts" are often spread out as new stories. The latest religious one is about a Methodist negro preacher who explained the "gross darkness" in Isaiah as meaning 144 times pitchy dark. A correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette* declares that this explanation was given by a Primitive Methodist preacher at Adelaide some twenty-five years ago. Very likely. And no doubt it was heard of twenty-five years before that.

The sermon was just started on Thanksgiving Sunday in St. Peter's, Budleigh Salterton, when a young man jumped up from his seat, feeling that Old Nick had paid him a surprise visit, for his clothes were actually on fire. It soon appeared, however, that it was not really a branch establishment of Hades set up in the house of God. The young man had sat upon a box of matches in his pocket, and they had ignited and set his coat in a blaze. Unfortunately, he was rather severely burnt. While he was getting rid of the fiery garment there was great excitement among the male worshippers, and great alarm among the female part of the congregation.

Catherine Wilson, trading as a lady palmist under the all very fine and large name of Madame de Mudella, has been sentenced at Cheltenham to one month's imprisonment with hard labor for fortune-telling. Evidently the law does not mean to sanction any new branches of the old business of mystery. The existing Churches are held to be quite enough in that line. Besides, they are ancient and respectable. Moreover, they are too strong to be dealt with by the police.

Russia is like America in one thing. It is a land of strange sects. One of the latest is called the "Benefactors." Its members believe in the approaching end of the world, and they seem to prepare for this event by unlimited beer-drinking. Perhaps they think it will fortify them against the conflagration. A hogshead of "swipes" wouldn't burn easily. There is another new sect in Lithuania, which also believes that the Day of Judgment is at hand. Those who run this sect have persuaded the believers to place their wealth in the hands of their pastors for "good works." Of course, this is a very old game. It was played by the Catholic Church nearly a thousand years ago, and has flourished at intervals ever since. The end of the world doesn't arrive, but the gentlemen who take charge of the property are all right, anyhow. They practise what in betting circles is called "hedging."

The *Globe* states that it has received from a correspondent a copy of a bill, posted on a certain chapel, which reads as follows:—

—— Tabernacle,
Sunday, — October, at —
Preacher: Rev. A. B.
Subject: Death and Then—
A warm welcome for all.

The Rev. Forbes Philips states that he was called one night to baptise a little girl, the child of some poor people in a common lodging-house. The parents pleaded their great poverty and received the customary shilling; but as he passed out of the door the deputy jocularly observed: "You are the seventh parson that has baptised that kid to-day."

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

SHILLING WEEK.

(Fourth List.)

To Tuesday, October 23.

W. Bowie, 1s.; J. Winlo, 1s.; H. Bennett, 1s.; J. Ralph, 1s.; W. Pattison, 1s.; Tom Taylor, 1s.; Mrs. Taylor, 1s.; Miss Rayner, 1s.; R. Taylor, 1s.; J. H. R., 2s.; W. T. Pitt, 2s.; Major G. O. Warren, 5s.; Hugh Thomson, 5s.; J. W. Taylor, 2s.; Satan, 2s.; T. R. Almond, 1s.; J. S. Finlay, 5s.; T. Miles, 2s.; R. D. Hoon, 1s.; J. Fish, 10s.; G. Smith, 10s.; C. Davis, 5s.; C. Bowman, 10s.; M. Haworth, 1s.; Ada Slack, 1s.; F. R. Phillips, 1s.; Edward Self, 5s.; J. Davies, 5s.; J. T. E., 5s.; J. G., 1s.; D. Brough, 2s. 6d.; per W. F. T., 4s.; C. P., 1s.; J. W., 1s.; H. Smith, 5s.; J. Walters, 1s.; R. Walters, 1s.; W. S. M., 5s.; W. Waymark, 1s.; Three "Dicky Sams," 7s. 6d.; W. P. Murray, 3s.; P. Dawson, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Dawson, 2s. 6d.; W. Robinson, 5s.; W. S. Wood, 1s.; T. T. (Hull), 5s.

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 28, Leicester Secular Hall; 11, "China and the Christian Powers"; 6.30, "Does Death End Us?"

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—October 28, Glasgow. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. A. JACKSON.—We have not referred to the matter for a very good reason. The National Secular Society did not receive an invitation to the Democratic Convention, neither did one find its way to Mr. Foote personally or to the editor of the *Freethinker*.

R. CHAPMAN.—Thanks. See paragraph and acknowledgments.

W. NASH.—Why lose your temper? How could we tell that you had read the pamphlet? We don't acquire knowledge by intuition. You forget, too, that assertion is not proof. You should have indicated the "two falsifications," the "anachronism" and the "error." Unlike yourself, apparently, we are always willing to learn.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Glad to hear the Birmingham Branch had a good sale of literature at the Town Hall on Sunday, including nearly two hundred copies of the *Freethinker*. Additions to your list for Shilling Week acknowledged elsewhere.

MAJOR G. O. WARREN, subscribing to Shilling Week, says: "I am sorry I cannot increase it a thousand fold. The *Freethinker* is always a treat of logical reasoning, which is more than can be said of many other periodicals I wot of."

J. W. TAYLOR.—Pleased to know you appreciate our work in "combating superstition and hypocrisy." Of course we wish, as you do, that you could send a larger contribution to Shilling Week. Still, you have sent what you could afford, and that is more than hundreds have done—at least as yet.

J. FISIL.—Contents-sheet shall be posted to the newsagent. We are obliged to you for your trouble in the matter. It is pleasant to hear that you are recovering from the nasty blow dealt you by the bigots who got you dismissed from a post you had occupied with credit for eighteen years. We take the opportunity of saying that your brave, disinterested work for the cause is enough to shame a good many timid, indolent, and indifferent Freethinkers.

V. ROGER.—We shall be gratified to learn, when the time comes, that you have won a seat on the new Lambeth Borough Council. Men of your stamp are much wanted on public bodies.

A. WEBBER.—Glad to hear from you as one from Australia and a friend of Joseph Symes. We endorse all you say of him. He has had a terrible fight. We note your opinion that the class of people who read, or would read, the *Freethinker* are not likely to be much affected one way or another by its price. Miss Vance has sent you the *Bible Handbook*,

W. COX (Liverpool).—Please post lecture-notices in time to reach us by Tuesday morning.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—G. Alward, 10s.; C. Bowman, 10s.; A. Webber, 10s.; C. E. Hall, 10s.; J. M. McInnes, 10s.; Sydney A. Gimson, £2; W. S. Wood, 5s.

W. B. THOMPSON.—Your lecture-notice was not posted till Tuesday, as the Chatham postmark shows. We strain a point to insert it. Please note that such things should reach us by Tuesday's first post at the latest.

J. M. MCINNES.—Pleased to receive your promise of £2 towards the Twentieth Century Fund before the end of the year. The 10s. sent is acknowledged this week. Your suggestion as to a pamphlet is noted.

J. YOUNG.—Shall appear.

W. S. M.—Bristol will be taken in hand when the concentration scheme is extended westward. The local Freethinkers do not display much activity themselves.

W. P. MURRAY, subscribing to Shilling Week, says: "I take this opportunity to thank you for the pleasure which your paper, lectures, and books have given me for some years."

G. S. B. handed us at Birmingham £5 of the £10 he promised towards the Twentieth Century Fund.

C. HANDLEY sends 5s. as promised to the Twentieth Century Fund.

T. T. (Hull).—Have acknowledged under Shilling Week. Thanks for your interesting letter. Your closing reflection is very just. Evolution is a slow process, and we must not be disheartened when we cannot force the pace.

D. HARGREAVES.—We never heard of the Mr. Power you mention, or anybody else, turning Mrs. Besant's meeting against her many years ago at Peterborough, or elsewhere. He is no doubt romancing. Certainly he was not "caricatured" for his performance in the *Freethinker*. Some of these "infidel slayers" have fine imaginations.

EDWARD SELF.—Many thanks for your letter. Contents are noted, and shall be acted upon.

J. DAVIES, subscribing to Shilling Week, says: "I sincerely hope that, if there are many more laggards like myself, they will not hesitate to show their appreciation of this well-conceived scheme."

RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Awakener of India—Club Life—Ethical World—Boston Investigator—Paisley Express—Freethought Magazine—Manchester City News—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Two Worlds.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE delivers two lectures to-day (Oct. 28) in the Secular Hall, Leicester. His subject in the morning is to be "China and the Christian Powers," and in the evening "Does Death End Us?" The latter lecture is the one that drew such a crowded audience at Manchester.

Sunday was a red-letter day with the Birmingham Secularists. They had their Freethought Demonstration, as was decided at the N. S. S. Conference; and they had besides a special lecture by the President. There was a first-rate audience in the afternoon. It was a particularly *good* audience, in every sense of the word—intelligent, attentive, and keenly appreciative; not the least so being the liberal sprinkling of ladies. Mr. Watts took the chair, and Mr. Cohen occupied a seat on the platform. Some very flattering things were said about the lecturer by way of introduction, which were as generously applauded. Mr. Foote, who was heartily cheered on rising, said that he was embarrassed by these eulogies, and only hoped he deserved a tenth part of them. Had he known he was going to be bombarded in that way, he would have felt inclined to execute a strategic movement to the rear until he was called upon to lecture. Having eased his mind on this point, he proceeded with his subject—"Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ." For over an hour the interest of the audience was unflagging; smiles, laughter, and applause came at frequent intervals, and the peroration was cheered vociferously. A few questions were asked and answered—no discussion being allowed; and then the chairman pronounced his benediction. Altogether it was a most successful gathering, and the collection added substantially to the fund for meeting the day's heavy expenses.

At six o'clock in the evening the Town Hall was open again, and the gathering audience was treated to music by the City Organist and solos by Mr. J. Matthews. The efforts of both were very warmly appreciated. At seven o'clock Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, and Ward, with several members of the Birmingham N. S. S. Branch, appeared upon the platform amidst enthusiastic cheers. There was a magnificent assembly in front of them, including a considerable proportion of ladies. The body of the hall, the large back gallery, and the narrower side galleries, were all full. The only vacant place was in the orchestra, high up behind the speakers. Mr. Foote presided as announced, and the first speaker was Mr. H. Percy Ward, who met with a highly gratifying reception, which showed that his labors in Birmingham have not been in vain. He dealt with the "What would you put in its place?" argument, much to the satisfaction of the meeting. Mr. Charles Watts was the next speaker, and his vigorous and telling address roused the audience to a high pitch of enthusiasm. At this point the chairman said that they would intercalate the most religious part of the proceedings—the collection. This being done, Mr. C. Cohen was called upon for the third speech. He was in a philosophic vein, which lent variety to the oratory. The meeting followed him closely, took all his intellectual points with admirable verve, and gave him a splendid round of applause at the finish. Then came the final speech by Mr. Foote; and when the cheering had subsided, and a vote of thanks had been accorded to the Mayor for the use of the Town Hall, the great meeting broke up and filed out of the building. Many of the local "saints" lingered for

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a while in the big ante-room under the platform, congratulating each other, and the visitors from London, on the grand and perfect success of the Demonstration.

None of the daily papers condescended, or ventured, to pay the slightest attention to this glorious gathering. Had it been a religious assembly, it would have received abundant notice. But this ostrich policy is ridiculous when the Secularists can bring the public together in such a fashion.

It cannot be doubted that this Demonstration, preceded by the surprisingly good afternoon meeting, produced a far greater effect than a long course of ordinary meetings. It showed in so many ways the real strength of the Freethought movement. We do not mean, of course, that Demonstrations should supplant the regular propaganda; we only mean that they are a special and powerful auxiliary. And it seems advisable to continue the effort in Manchester and in other great centres of population. This will involve a good deal of expense. But what of that? Other parties have to pay for such "revival" work, and so must we.

On Saturday evening, October 20, a well-attended meeting was held at the Bristol-street Board School, Birmingham, in favor of the candidature of Mr. H. Percy Ward, who is standing for election on the "Secular education" ticket in the approaching School Board elections. Mr. Charles Watts presided, and, after Mr. Ward had ably and tersely explained his position, a vote of confidence was proposed by Mr. Willis and seconded by Mr. Andrews. It was carried unanimously, after speeches in support by Mr. Phillips, editor of the *Two Worlds*, Mr. C. Cohen, and Mr. G. W. Foote. This meeting was fairly reported in the *Daily Post*. On Monday evening another meeting was held in favor of Mr. Ward's candidature, at which Mr. Watts was the principal speaker. We believe there is every prospect of Mr. Ward's cutting a good figure at the poll.

To-day, Sunday, October 28, Mr. Charles Watts lectures three times in Glasgow. His subjects are varied and interesting, and should draw large audiences.

Mr. A. B. Moss had a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. He will be followed there this evening (Oct. 28) by Mr. C. Cohen, who is to lecture on "Christian Missions in Africa, India, and China." Mr. Cohen has been making a special study of this subject, and is writing a book upon it, which will be issued by the Freethought Publishing Company. We strongly urge London Freethinkers to bring their less heterodox friends along to hear this lecture. It is sure to be instructive, and, in some respects, entertaining.

Mr. A. B. Moss is a candidate for a seat on the new Municipal Council of Camberwell. He has been a member of the old Vestry for a considerable time. He is in the Coburg Ward, and he runs on the Progressive ticket. The Progressive candidates are called the three M's. They are Mayston, Moses, and Moss. We did not expect to see Moss running with Moses. In the circumstances, however, we wish success to both.

Mr. Victor Roger, another N. S. S. vice-president, and a member of the old Lambeth Vestry, is one of the Progressive candidates in the Bishop's Ward, Lambeth, for the new Borough Council. He has been very attentive to his duties, and has served faithfully on several important committees. No doubt the Freethinkers in that Ward will give him their best support. There is another Secularist on the Progressive list—Mr. Frederick Wood, who is known as "The Cabman's Friend." Years ago he was one of those cabmen who refused to take any fare from Charles Bradlaugh when driving him home from the House of Commons at night. We believe he is in a better worldly position now, but the old incident should be recollected by all who keep the memory of Charles Bradlaugh green in their hearts.

Mr. F. J. Gould is appealing to the burgesses of Leicester to elect him on the new School Board, and we hear that he has an extremely good chance of being successful. His address is an excellent one. The words "entirely secular" stand out in bold type. Mr. Gould is not put forward by the Secular Society, but of course the members will support him. In a letter to us he calculates that his expenses will be about £25, towards which he had received: Leicester Friends, £3; F. Smallman, £2; George Anderson, £1. We shall ask the Secular Society, Limited, to contribute something to his election fund. Any reader of this journal who wishes to help should send at once to Mr. Gould, at 41 Lower Hastings-street, Leicester.

Mr. Frederic Harrison, the well-known Positivist, has sent Mr. Gould a friendly letter after reading his address. "I wish you," he says, "all success as a candidate for the School Board."

Francis Parkham, one of the best of American historical writers, was once in a boat on Jamaica Pond with his sister Eliza. "If I should be asked about your religious beliefs," she said, "it seems to me I might say that you are a reverent agnostic." "Yes, that's about it," was his answer. This is recorded by his biographer, Mr. C. H. Farnham.

Secretary E. C. Reichwald, of the American Secular Union, writing to Mr. Foote under date of October 9, invites him to attend the Annual Congress at Cincinnati on November 23, 24, and 25; or, in default of attendance, to send a letter to be read. Mr. Foote will be happy to send a letter. He is sorry he cannot stroll round to the Congress. London is just as far from Cincinnati as Cincinnati is from London. Of course he wishes the Congress all success.

We understand that an invitation to attend the Cincinnati Congress has also been sent to Mr. Watts. According to a report in the American Freethought press, the "saints" over there are counting on his attendance. We do not know on what ground. Mr. Watts says he has neither written nor spoken anything to justify this expectation. Perhaps the wish was father to the thought.

The Manchester Branch has arranged for a special course of lectures on the Darwinian Philosophy to be delivered in the Secular Hall on the last Sunday in each month. There will be lantern and microscopic illustrations. Local "saints" should please note.

The Wave of Reaction.

Those too-sanguine Freethinkers who think that all is over but the shouting in our battle with the Church may find food for thought in the declaration of George Brandes, the distinguished Danish Freethinker, as quoted recently in this paper, that the world is being swept by "a swelling wave of reaction." It is, indeed, well for us to seriously consider whether the modification of religious beliefs argues the early and permanent triumph of Rationalistic ideas and Secular policies. We should not forget that the world has seen many wide-extending changes in religion, and yet remains essentially religious. The masses have not been deeply affected by the acceptance by the select few of the scientific method of investigation. Superstition still dominates the vast majority of the world's inhabitants, even in the most enlightened lands. Those best qualified to give a valuable opinion are not astonished that this is so. Physical and mental and moral evolution proceeds very slowly. It was not to be expected that that which has been tens if not hundreds of thousands of years in building itself into the brain of man would be or could be driven out by a few decades, or even by several centuries of more or less wise educational work by a comparative handful of progressive men and women. We must find our comfort and reward in doing what we can to reduce the sum-total of inconvenience, pain, and danger that has always menaced those persons who did not agree with the majority, convinced that we shall not end the long struggle for light and right, that our children and our children's children for many, many centuries will be forced to continue the fight for rational thought and life in freedom. Those who imagine that religion, that invasive ecclesiasticism, is dead or swiftly dying are dwelling in the paradise of delusion.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Saucer-Crackers and Bible-Smackers.

"Usher (to Chinaman in the witness-box): 'The saucer is cracked, and if you do not tell the truth your soul will be cracked like the saucer.' (Laughter.) Usher: 'Silence!'"—*Daily Paper.*

The followers of Jesus laughed, according to report,
Because a man from China broke a saucer;
Well might you murmur "Silence!" Mr. Usher of the Court;
Such conduct was enough to make you raw, sir.

A Christian, when he steps inside the box to do a swear,
Applies his lips to Holy Writ and smacks it;
He's just as silly as the man who takes a piece of ware
And throws it down upon the ground and cracks it.

You can't believe what Theists say unless they take an oath,
And even then I'm hanged if you can trust 'em;
The Christian scorns the Chinese form, the Sceptic scorns them both;
To swear at all's an idiotic custom.

I'd rather be a Chinee than a Christian on the whole,
Though his creed's a silly one, and I despise it;
A Chinaman believes his Maker cracks a perjured soul,
But the other man believes his Maker fries it!

Ess Jay Bee.

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Edward Gibbon.

"When I contemplate the common lot of mortality, I must acknowledge that I have drawn a high prize in the lottery of life."—Gibbon.

"Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer."—Byron.

The perfervid praise which Macaulay bestowed upon Boswell is applicable to Edward Gibbon: "He has distanced all his competitors so decidedly that it is not worth while to place them. Eclipse is first, and the rest nowhere." Gibbon is, admittedly, the most famous writer of history in the English language. The *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is a masterpiece of genius and labor. It is a monumental work, bridging the gulf between the old world and the new. The wonder is that it should have proceeded, not from an academy of scholars, but from the brain and hand of a single man. With what mastery has he arranged his vast and incongruous material, gathered from the whole range of Classical, Byzantine, Mediæval, and Oriental literature, into one luminous and consistent tableau! What weight, majesty, and splendor in his style, in spite of its occasional grandiloquence!

It would be a pardonable exaggeration to declare that the reading of the *Decline and Fall* is an education in itself. That this encyclopædic history of thirteen centuries should ever be displaced is nearly impossible. Edward Gibbon died in London in January, 1794, at the comparatively early age of fifty-six, after a short illness, almost in the fulness of his intellectual power. The great work of his life was done when he was laid to rest in a remote village in Sussex. During the succeeding hundred years his reputation has been continually growing larger and firmer. The civilised world has now agreed to acknowledge the *Decline and Fall* as the grandest historical achievement ever accomplished.

Gibbon is not only our greatest historian; he is also, if we put poets aside, one of our foremost writers. He owes many readers to other than historical merits. It is even possible that no English writer equally old has so many readers to-day, if we except Bacon, Goldsmith, Defoe, or Boswell. If this is so, it is to the man of letters, and not to the historian, that it is due. It is not so much by what he tells us as by his incomparable way of telling it, that he attracts us. Like every great artist, he has given us himself as well as his subject.

If we return again and again to the *Decline and Fall*, it is less for the sake of Byzantine Emperors and Gothic invaders than for that of Gibbon himself. We feel the presence, behind every page, almost behind every sentence, of a great and original personality. Gibbon set a very high value upon style. We know that he would take several turns round his study-table before he could settle a period to his satisfaction. Having something of weight and importance to say, Gibbon was determined to give it all the advantages of a stately and splendid presentation. The stately structure of his immortal sentences remains for ever in just association with the grandeur of his theme. If the habit occasionally degenerated into an abuse, who, that loves dignity in a slipshod age, will care to condemn very severely a fault that came of loving it too well?

Gibbon's acidulated humor has been found distasteful by many otherwise estimable people. It is, however, one of the features in Gibbon's writings which the generality of his readers most clearly remember, and with which they would least willingly part. The most perfect examples will be found in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the *Decline and Fall*. In them Gibbon sketches the early spread of the Great Lying Christian Church. These two chapters show us the great historian as a Freethinker. Let us realise Gibbon's position. He pretends to give an account of the early Christians from the Christian standpoint, so as to hoodwink the solemn owls of orthodoxy. At the same time he contrives to throw doubt and discredit on the whole story. This is the sort of thing:—

> "But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the Church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and, pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alteration in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman Empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history."

There is less evidence in a big folio volume written for or against Christianity than in the deadly irony of these lines.

Gibbon is ostensibly censuring the sages for overlooking the Christian miracles. In reality, he is denying their occurrence by slyly pointing out that there is no contemporary record of them from disinterested sources. Hundreds of books, pamphlets, and reviews have been provoked by these "stinging caresses" of the great historian. But the victory remains with Gibbon. Even Cardinal Newman, a most reluctant witness, is compelled to admit this.

Having no case, Christian apologists charitably accuse Gibbon of having no "heart." It is a characteristically malignant lie. His friends did not find Gibbon lacking in affection. When Godfrey Clarke lost his father, "the infidel" Gibbon was the only man he wished to see, outside his own family. To his father, his step-mother, his aunt, and his few friends, Edward Gibbon was all that a son, a nephew, or a friend could be. He sacrificed, not merely his leisure and tastes, but something of his prospects and fortune, to gratify a father who had not thought too much of his son's interests. For Mrs. Gibbon he showed his unselfish nature by a perfectly voluntary increase of her jointure, and in carrying out her wishes, reasonable or the reverse. For "Aunt Kitty," whose life and ways and character lay so far from his, he proved his genuine affection by many acts of kindness. Only a man who had real depth of heart would have thought, as he did, of asking his host that "Aunt Kitty," when she went to Sheffield Place, might have the room in which he usually slept. This little act of thoughtfulness is characteristic of the man. No one claims that he possessed an exceptionally affectionate nature; but his intimate letters to his friends amply prove that he was not heartless. His attachment to Lord Sheffield and his family forms one of the most constant and beautiful types of friendship embalmed in literature. Such letters as that on the death of young Holroyd, on the death of Lady Sheffield, on the loss of Dryverdun and De Sévéry, give the lie to those pious traducers who seek to asperse the character of the great Sceptic. We like to think of Gibbon writing the pages of his immortal history amid the acacias of Lausanne. That beautiful and serene atmosphere is unsullied by the presence of Christian libellers. We will leave him in that haven of peace. He was a profound scholar, a great Freethinker, and one of the most splendid writers in the grand roll of English literature. He took what the years brought with open-hearted gratitude, he warmed both hands before the fire of life, and, as it burned low, he avowed himself ready to depart.

Mimnermus.

Inspiration.

Whilst the doors of the temple stand open, night and day, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely, it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul. What he announces, I must find true in me, or reject; and on his word, or as his second, be he who he may, I can accept nothing. On the contrary, the absence of this primary faith is the presence of degradation. As is the flood, so is the ebb. Let this faith depart, and the very words it spake, and the things it made, become false and hurtful.—*Emerson.*

The truth must be reiterated, for error is constantly repeated; and this not by individuals only, but by the multitude. In newspapers and encyclopædias, in schools and universities, error is everywhere to the fore, and sees with complacency that it has the support of the majority.—*Goethe.*

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Freethought in Belgium.

Not least amongst the revelations which surprised the English delegates at the International Freethought Congress at Paris was the stamp of power displayed by the Belgian section. The Congress only paid due homage to the zeal and initiative of the Belgian Freethinkers when it fixed the seat of the International Federation at Brussels and committed the details of the reorganisation of the international movement into the hands of the workers there, appointing as editor in chief of the organ of the Federation, *La Raison*, M. Léon Furnémont, the Deputy for Charleroi.

Belgium is no doubt a small place on the map, but it bulks largely in the world of Freethought. Amidst the teeming multitudes that swarm over its restricted area the Freethought propagandist is almost ubiquitous, conducting the campaign against Christianity with equal zeal and intelligence. A brief account, therefore, of the work carried on by our comrades in the tiny kingdom will, I am sure, be acceptable to my readers, and may, perhaps, encourage English Secularists along the path of friendly emulation.

During the last two or three years the record of the movement in Belgium is one of continuous progress. In 1891 a hundred Branches existed, having 10,000 members; and in September, 1892, the number of Branches had grown to 125, with more than 15,000 members. In 1898 the Branches had reached 200; and shortly afterwards, in the beginning of last year, the number had mounted to nearly 250. Even then new Societies, as in the Borinage, were in course of formation; and in the environs of Liège there is scarcely a commune, however small, that does not boast its Freethought Society—the Society at Ougrée having no less than 400 members. Belgian Freethought journalism is represented by *La Raison*, ably edited by J-B. Demoulin, and *De Rede*. The first, written wholly in French, is published at Brussels, and is the organ of the National Federation of Belgian Freethinkers; the latter, written in Flemish, is the organ of the Flemish Federation, and is published at Gand.

Enthusiasm and energy are the characteristics of Belgian Freethought. An illustration of this is furnished by the account of the function which took place on December 18, 1898, when a new standard was "inaugurated" at Nessonvaux, in the Liège district. Every train reaching Nessonvaux during the afternoon brought new contingents of demonstrators, bearing with them their banners. As the representatives of the various country Branches arrived they formed themselves into marching array, flying their respective banners as they went along, each person wearing in his button-hole a pansy, the sweet little flower emblematic of Freethought. More than six hundred persons were present at the ceremony, and speeches were delivered by a number of able exponents of our views, including, notably, Pierre Fluse, a working weaver, who is known as one of the chief orators in the country.

Here is another instance. In January, 1899, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of the first Society belonging to the Central Federation took place at Jolimont. A procession bearing twenty-nine banners, and consisting of many thousands of members, took part in the *fête*. The first speaker was Jules Gilles, the honorary president, who was moved to tears as he stood beside the banner under which he had proclaimed the principles of Freethought during a quarter of a century in all the surrounding villages, and he wept with joy to think that what had been a road to Calvary for him twenty-five years before had now become a triumphant procession. As the white-headed veteran kissed, amidst his tears, the banner endeared to him by so many memories, the whole assembly was moved to sympathetic admiration. All this bespeaks numbers, enthusiasm, and organisation.

The Belgian Freethinkers occasionally enjoy the luxury of debate. An interesting discussion took place at Jolimont last year *à propos* of the aforementioned celebration. The disputants were M. Jules des Essarts, editor of the *Journal de Charleroi*, a well-known Freethought advocate, and M. Schyns, a Protestant minister. The subject was the character of the Apostles. Nearly a thousand people flocked from all parts—from Mons, Charleroi, Brussels, and elsewhere—to pay, on a Sunday be it noted, in order to witness the *post-mortem* examination of the founders of Christianity.

By the way, the inauguration of new banners seems fatally doomed to lead up to debate in Belgium. In the very heart of the country, at Solre-sur-Sambre, a new banner was recently unfolded. The ceremony was an imposing one. A magnificent procession formed outside the local headquarters of the Freethought Society with bands, banners, and ensigns, and marched through the principal places in the commune. The local *curé* had publicly prayed for rain, but heaven, by some stupid mistake, sent a strong wind instead. Happily, God and his priest were frustrated, for the Town Hall was available, and a large audience—for a detached district—estimated at from five hundred to eight hundred, listened to the various speeches and wickedly applauded. A farcical Christian named Papette opposed, and sent his audience off into screams of laughter at the expense of God and his Christ.

One of the notable features in connection with Freethought in Belgium is the Rationalist Orphanage at the Chaussée Alsemberg, Brussels. It was founded in 1896 by a Freethinker, M. Adolphe Deluc, and is solely maintained by the subscriptions of the party. The Orphanage is established at a well-appointed building, having all the latest hygienic appliances. The number of children at present stands at thirty-five; but it is hoped, as funds pour in, that the family of little ones cared for and trained under Freethought auspices may increase. The orphans are of both sexes, and appear to be treated with intelligence and kindness. The education given them is purely secular, without any admixture of religion. The principle is adopted of the co-education of the sexes, and one of the objects aimed at by the founder is to show by experience that the reality of Secular morality is, on the plane of education proper, practically superior to the fictions of religious superstition. It is gratifying to find that each issue of *La Raison* evidences the receipt of subscriptions gathered from societies and individuals for the maintenance of this worthy institution. M. Deluc died only a few months ago at the ripe age of eighty-nine, but the Orphanage which he established will not, it is hoped, suffer because its founder has passed over to the majority.

The literature of Belgian Freethought deserves a moment's attention. Numerous tracts, written in both French and Flemish, are distributed far and wide by the various Branches. A whole library of pamphlets is issued at remarkably cheap rates from the office of *La Raison*. They are well printed, and, in some cases, illustrated; and the marvel is that so much reading matter, and of such excellent quality too, can be got out at such low prices. One of the most remarkable issues is the *Catechism for Grown-up Children*, a genuine literary curiosity, originally issued * in the year VIII., and, on account of its dangerous onslaughts and insinuations, suppressed, and all but wiped out by that remorseless craven, the Church. The author of the Catechism is unknown, but it is supposed to have been written by a priest converted to Freethought. This invaluable propagandist tract, containing twenty-eight pages, twelve illustrations, and a fine pictorial front page, sells at fifteen centimes (three-halfpence). Another very interesting publication is a little handy *Almanack of Freethought*, issued annually at Liège, published under the auspices of the "Federation of the Basin of the Meuse." It contains sixty-four pages of useful information—short articles, poems, anecdotes, and pithy selections from pithy minds—and is priced at fifteen centimes. It circulates throughout the whole country, and obtains, as it deserves, the support of the various Branches.

Belgian Freethought is of vigorous growth. It is earnest and intelligent, and creates an energetic type of propagandist. Amongst its leading figures are: M. Léon Furnémont, a splendid orator, one of the old guard; M. Jules des Essarts; M. Felix Meert; M. Joseph Thirion, president of the Rationalist Federation in the Basin of the Meuse; my friend, M. J-B. Demoulin, the editor of *La Raison*; and a host of other choice spirits, some of whom have been named already.

* Published then as *Catéchisme des Christicoles.*

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It is reassuring to know that the interests of the movement are committed into such trusty hands. Freethought under their guidance becomes no narrow sectional movement. The two vigorous races—Walloon and Flemish—thanks to the activity of our Belgian *confrères*, are now being awakened from their superstitious slumber. The work of their redemption is growing day by day.

Time and education are on the side of our Belgian brothers. Reaction here in England, or there in Belgium and elsewhere, may triumph for a brief space, but the twin forces of sceptical science and popular progress will ultimately sweep the old priestly cobwebs to the ground. I rejoice that my presence at the International Freethought Congress at Paris brought me in contact with the refined and thoughtful men who are doing service for humanity by ridding the popular mind of the bogey of religion. William Heaford.

Are there any Lower Slopes?

"Mimnermus" writes of the minor poet as browsing on the lower slopes of Parnassus. This description starts the thought that "Mimnermus" uses the term "minor poet" in a sense different from that of Edgar Poe, who writes, in his interesting and acute essay on *The Poetic Principle*, as follows: "By minor poems I mean, of course, poems of little length.....I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase 'a long poem' is simply a contradiction in terms." And Poe goes on to demonstrate with great acumen his contention. Minor poems are to Poe not the greatest only of all poems, but the only poems that can be wholly great, and the minor poet, or the writer of minor poems, the greatest of poets. The poet can never be sufficiently inspired to write a long and perfect poem, nor a reader be excited by even a perfect long poem, for more than a brief time—half an hour, Poe suggests; and this suggestion seems to limit a poem for unwaning effectiveness to, say, 250 or 300 lines. After exceeding that length its influence begins to fail. The perfect long poem, then, as to form, would be a succession of minor poems, and of this we have an instance in James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*, *Sunday up the River*, and *Sunday at Hampstead*, whereby "B.V.," in practice, endorses Poe's views; whilst, in his *Weddah* and *Vane's Story*, he considerably outruns Poe's line limit, although in these two pieces there are well-marked sections and parts which seem to hint at a sense, on "B.V.'s" part, of the risk of taking either poem at one reading.

In the *City*, however, not only does "B.V." divide into sections, but he continually varies his form of verse also, and so constitutes what Poe considers the only possible form of the long poem—namely, a succession of short poems—as contrasted with the long poem merely cut up into lengths more or less short. Now, I have always found *The City of Dreadful Night* readable without diminished interest from first line to last; but before I came across Pope's essay I don't know that I'd ever thought why it was so to me. Perhaps, if pushed for a reason, I should have fallen back on its varied metre and clearly-defined episodes and interludes. Each of which, whilst in itself a whole, yet formed a perfect part in a larger scheme. But Poe's essay saved me the trouble of thinking out a reason; for no sooner had I read his definition of the only possible long poem that would not be "a contradiction in terms" than I said to myself: "Why, 'B.V.' has done it, and precisely on Poe's lines"; possibly did it with Poe's opinion in his mind, for "B.V.'s" admiration of Poe was deep and warm. At any rate, Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night* seems to me, judged by Poe's standard, the most perfect long poem in our language, for its variations resemble those of a fine symphony in number and charm, and the excitement of the reader's interest is kept at the maximum throughout by the very means triumphantly used by the great masters of tone; presenting the theme in so many variations that to the end we want more, and taste no "sad satiety." *The Fairy Queen* and *Paradise Lost* sate us very quickly, and even some of Shelley's poems, to say nothing of several of Browning's, threaten to cloy and fail for lack of this true musical method adopted by "B. V." and contended for by Poe. Finally, I do not think Poe admitted any lower slopes to his Parnassus, hardly any degrees in poetry. A writer of verse, to Poe, was either a poet or not a poet: if the former, he was free of the Parnassian Republic; if the latter, he could not enter at all. I feel that this is the right view, and that Dekker and Lovelace and Peel and Greene and Herrick and Suckling are not to be set on any lower slopes than Chaucer and Marlowe and Shakespeare and Milton, each of the former six having done work in *quality* as good as any of that done by the latter four poets. And as Poe, to quote him for the last time herein, says: "As yet they [the Quarterlies] have not insisted on our estimating Lamartine by the cublic foot, or Pollock by the pound; but what else are we to *infer* from their continual prating about *sustained* effort?"

J. H. B.

Who doth Hear?

A prayer from someone's breaking heart, entreating
A cherished life, is raised to "him on high":
"I fear, Lord, that my loved one's life is fleeting;
Hear me this time; O do not let him die!"
The moments speed, and even draws the curtain
About a corpse and one whose faith sincere
Says, still and ever: "He will live, I'm certain;
I've prayed to God for him I hold most dear,
And God doth hear!"

Behold one longing day by day for pardon
From that dread Judge Fear's eyes discern above—
A Judge whose heart at wails of woe may harden,
Or may be moved to pity and to love;
Now, calm in confidence and high elation,
The "culprit" looks aloft and knows no fear;
Anon he cries: "Is there for *me* salvation?
Pardon me, Lord, and make thy pardon clear!"
But none doth hear!

Poor human wrecks are day by day beseeching
The Lord to give them joy of life again;
And trembling hands feel for those hands far-reaching
Of him who stoops to mortals in their pain.
Each mournful plaint upon the air is wasted,
No Hand from heaven to earth doth e'er appear;
And none that "living water" ever tasted
Which still the Christian craves with sigh and tear—
No God doth hear.

There is no God, or none who heeds the placing
Of sorrow, joy, and love in mortals' lives;
Of no avail ourselves in dust abasing—
The battle is to him who nobly strives.
Man is man's savior! All the god-host banish!
Let but the hand of one true friend be near
To grip in hours of darkness, troubles vanish:
A *brother's* all we need when life is drear,
For he *doth hear!*

John Young.

Not One, but All.

We drain all cisterns, and, waxing greater by all these supplies, we crave a better and more abundant food. The man has never lived that can feed us for ever. The human mind cannot be enshrined in a person who shall set a barrier on any one side to this unbounded, unboundable empire. It is one central fire, which, flaming now out of the lips of Etna, lightens the capes of Sicily; and, now out of the throat of Vesuvius, illuminates the towers and vineyards of Naples. It is one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is one soul which animates all men.—*Emerson.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Christian Missions in Africa, India, and China."

Camberwell (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Famines in India."

East London Ethical Society (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, H. Snell, "The Religion of the Body."

South London Ethical Society, Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road: 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "The Negro in America."

Open-air Propaganda.

Station-road (Camberwell): 11.30, A lecture.

Battersea Park Gates: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 3.15, E. Leggett.

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies; 7.30, F. A. Davies.

Kingsland (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

Belfast Ethical Society (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): A lecture.

Birmingham Branch: H. P. Ward—11, in the Bull Ring; 7, in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street. For particulars of afternoon, and subjects for morning and evening, see Saturday's *Birmingham Daily Mail*.

Chatham Secular Society (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Dramatic Entertainment by the Society's Dramatic Class.

Newcastle-on-Tyne (1 Grainger-street): 3, Monthly meeting.

Glasgow (110 Brunswick-street): Charles Watts—11.30, "Scientists of the Victorian Era"; 2.30, "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?" 6.30, "Secularism: Its Necessity and Superiority."

Hull (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Mr. Nicholls, "A Debatable Subject."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, G. W. Foote—11, "China and the Christian Powers"; 6.30, "Does Death End Us?"

Liverpool (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Stanley Jones, "Right Hon. A. J. Balfour and the *Foundations of Belief*."

Manchester Secular Hall (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. A. Rogerson, "The Lowest Forms of Life." With lantern illustrations by Mr. Flatters.

Sheffield Secular Society (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday evening: Vocal and Instrumental Music, Recitations, etc.

South Shields (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "The Isle of Man."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—October 28, Athenæum Hall. November 4, Glasgow. 11, Aberdeen.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—October 28, Birmingham. November 4, Manchester. 18, Birmingham. 25, Sheffield. 26 and 27, Debate at Sheffield. December 9, Glasgow.

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THE

Freethinker

Editod by G. W. FOOTE.

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The "C.I.V.'s" at St. Paul's.

NATURE has endowed all animals with the instinct of self-preservation—including priests. Consequently we are not surprised at the zealous way in which the men of God go to work to maintain their hold upon the people. It must be recollected that they have had thousands of years of experience in running their business. They know just exactly what to do in almost every conceivable circumstance. You never catch them napping when their profits and privileges are concerned. They have developed to perfection the art of gulling and exploiting the mob. One of their clever little tricks is this. They persuade the nation that they must have a finger in every pie, and that it would otherwise never cook properly, even if it did not turn rotten and stinking. The priest's blessing, or his drop of holy water, or his sacred viaticum, or his something else, is necessary at every turn of life from the cradle to the death-bed. He christens children, churches mothers, marries lovers, catechises and confirms males and females, prays over the sick, and books the dying to kingdom-come. He creeps into schools, crawls into colleges, turns up at all sorts of dedications, and tries to make the world believe that no public function could possibly succeed without his presence. He puts in an appearance even at the launching of a battleship, and blesses it in the name of the Prince of Peace.

It was therefore not astonishing that the City Imperial Volunteers, on returning home from the war in South Africa, should have to march through the crowded streets of London to St. Paul's Cathedral. They were hungry and footsore when they got there. They had also been pushed about by a vast, enthusiastic, ill-regulated, and disorderly mob. It would have been a treat to arrive at the waiting banquet, with its good victuals and champagne. But the poor, toilworn C.I.V.'s had to give the parsons a turn before they could reach their feeding-place. A whole gang of parsons, from the Bishop of Stepney downwards, stood ready to receive them on the steps of the great London joss-house. These reverend gentlemen were all in full fig. They had on all their best ecclesiastic finery—a striking contrast to the half-guinea suit that Jesus Christ doffed before his crucifixion. In the name of God—whom they know just as much about as the biggest fool who listens to them—they welcomed the fighting-men who had seen more hard work in a year than the clergy see in a lifetime. Then the service began in the Cathedral. Of course it had to be short. But the parsons did not mind that. What they wanted was a look in—and they got it.

Do not suppose, dear reader, that *we* were inside St. Paul's. We were not invited, and we are not in the habit of attending religious services. Still, we dare say the music was fine, and the sermon was short, and a seat was welcome to those who had been on their legs so long, and in such circumstances. But though we did not hear the music—which we regret, nor the sermon—for which we are thankful, we had read the special prayers beforehand. They were got ready in good time, and even published—perhaps in order that God Almighty might be able to study them carefully. These prayers were perfunctory and mechanical. Any clerical scribe, with the Prayer Book beside him, could easily turn out such stuff by the yard—or the mile. There was only one human touch in the lot. It was the reference to "our comrades smitten down by sword or sickness, who have departed from us in faith and do now rest in the sleep of peace." Oh yes, they *do* rest in the sleep of peace. An *everlasting* peace. No pain, no sorrow, no hard marches, no harder fighting, no still harder wrestling with the grim enteric fiend. All is over. They lie in their last beds. Their dust is mingling with the soil of the far-off foreign land. But many a mother, many a maiden, carries about a heavy heart in consequence; and here and there a father breathes heavily for them in sleepless hours of night.

But what is to be thought of the following rigmarole?

> O Almighty God, who art a strong tower of defence unto thy servants against the face of their enemies: We yield thee praise and thanksgiving for our deliverance from those great and apparent dangers wherewith we were encompassed: We acknowledge thy goodness that we were not delivered over as a prey unto them: beseeching thee still to continue such thy mercies towards us, that all the world may know that thou art our Savior and mighty deliverer; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Was greater nonsense, or more ill-conditioned nonsense, ever penned? Is this the result of the combined genius of all the clergy who hang about the Chapter House in St. Paul's Churchyard? Why, a couple of penny-a-line journalists could have turned out something better, and done it for five shillings—exclusive of beer and baccy. What the deuce is meant by the word "prey"? One would think that the Boers were in the habit of eating their prisoners, or at least of killing them. Perhaps the clergy were thinking of the Chinese. Perhaps they were haunted by thoughts of the fate of certain missionaries amongst cannibals. And what is the meaning of "our deliverance" at the hands of God? If God delivered the C.I.V.'s who have come home, he failed to deliver those who remain (for ever) in South Africa. That is to say, he deliberately let them be killed. But is any man amongst the C.I.V.'s such a fool, or such a hypocrite, as to imagine that those who escaped death were any better worth saving than those who fell? It would puzzle the clergy themselves to explain God's partiality. Perhaps they would say it is all a mystery. Well, if it *is* a mystery, let them hold their silly and impudent tongues.

Is it not absurd to declare, at this time of day, that God is a strong tower of defence unto his servants? He may be so to the clergy, but the only enemy they fight is that invisible personage, the Devil, and few wounds are incurred in *that* warfare. He was no tower of defence, however, to the thousands of British soldiers—with chaplains to remind him of his duty—who have perished in South Africa. He has not even been any tower of defence to the still more pious Boers. At the outset of the war President Kruger assured his fighting burghers that God Almighty directed every bullet. He knew better, because he also congratulated them on their good shooting. Perhaps he really believed as much as our clergy do. They assured us that the Lord was on our side, and he assured his burghers that the Lord was on their side. But every man of sense knows that the Lord is on the winning side. The multitudinous British legions have been too many for the Free Staters and Transvaalers. The two Republics have been swamped and annexed, and President Kruger is flying to Europe. We have not heard if the Lord is on board that Dutch battleship with him. But we dare say the Lord is as much there as he is at St. Paul's Cathedral—or anywhere else.

G. W. FOOTE.

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Religion's Raw Material.

THERE is a somewhat old-fashioned controversy as to whether man is or is not, originally or by nature, religious. The advocates of the former view point to the indisputable fact that the vast majority of people *are* religious—more or less—and that often, when the *form* of religion has been destroyed, the type of mind still continues to manifest itself. On the contrary side, it is pointed out, religion has no existence apart from its special forms, and if these can be shown to be the product of education and experience, which is only education carried on over a longer period, then it is fair to assume that the religious beliefs of man are only the expression of his past experience, just as the servile instincts of a slave-class are the expression of their past social history.

Both points of view contain an element of truth, although, as ordinarily stated, neither contains the whole truth, and both have been merged into one by the all-conquering doctrine of evolution. The personal experience of any one individual carries us but a very little way in helping us to understand the stock of ideas and beliefs of which he is the centre. To understand these aright, one has to grasp the truth, put somewhat quaintly by Oliver Wendell Holmes, that man, instead of being twenty or forty or sixty years old, can, as a matter of fact, count his age by thousands of years. Each one of us is an antiquity; each of us finds our beginnings in the dim pre-historic past, as we shall find our continuation in the unborn future.

It is the past that contains the clue to the present, and it is the savage life of the past that contains the key to much of the civilised present. The origins of all fundamental religious ideas have to be sought amid conditions that are to be found to-day only in uncivilised communities, or in civilised ones only so far as they retrace the stages through which their ancestors have passed. But, paradoxical as it may sound, one need not go to the past for the past. It can be found here in the present, expressing itself not only in our institutions, but likewise in the development of each individual. Each child, in the earlier stages of its mental development, is a picture in miniature of what was once the normal condition of the adult man and woman. The fear of a child in face of the strange and unknown, the indistinct sense of causation in children, with the spontaneous ascription of life to inanimate objects and forces, to say nothing of the predominance of the lower and more selfish feelings, all brings us face to face with the mental condition from which religions spring, and to which religion still makes its most fervent appeals.*

One may say, therefore, with fair accuracy, that there is in children a tendency to religion—that is, they possess in their earlier years the fetishistic type of mind that was once characteristic of the race; and in this sense only can religion be looked upon as natural. It is an infantile disease, belonging to both periods of childhood, racial and individual. As natural as are other infantile disorders, the child would outgrow its early and inherited supernaturalism, as it becomes immune from scarlet fever or measles, if it were only allowed to pursue an unbroken and unhindered course of development. But this it is not allowed to do. In the hands of parents who entertain mistaken notions of their duty, and of a professional priesthood, who have a keen sense of self-interest, this mental phase is seized, and by artificial stimulation is strengthened and prolonged right through life. That which should be a passing phase only is thus converted into a permanent characteristic; and, having brought about this result, the minister of religion appeals to its existence in the adult as a justification of the procedure adopted.

One need not go much further than these simple considerations to find the grounds for the anxiety of the priesthood to force religion on the childhood. Childhood is the most favorable period—perhaps the *only* period—for the inculcation of religion. It is only when the sense of the mysterious is strong, and is enforced by a feeling of helplessness and a consciousness of ignorance, that religion grips its devotees strongly. At other times it *may* appeal to one here and there as a plausible speculation, but it does not produce a strong sense of conviction. There is, therefore, every reason for the priest securing the child; and one preacher, at least, as reported in the current issue of the *Christian World Pulpit*, seems fully alive to its importance. His anxiety is not so much for teaching religious beliefs as it is for getting children into church, and thus unconsciously inducing a state of mind favorable to religion. "The influence which a church has upon a child," he ingenuously explains, "does not lie in what he hears or understands.....it is the silent influences of the place that tell upon him." And these "silent influences" are all calculated to encourage that feeling of weakness and mystification on which religion lives. "The large spaces, the peculiar furnishings, the silence and isolation from everything that is familiar to him.....will fill him with a sense of strangeness and difference.....the music of the organ, the voice of the minister, the singing of the choir and the congregation, all carry the impress of the strange and the unexplainable."

So far the candor of the description leaves little to be desired; and when, further, the reasons given for encouraging these feelings are that the child "is where the savage was," that all religion begins in a sense of the "vague and unaccountable," and that he gets "an ingrained, an instinctive respect for the church and the habit of going to it; he gets the feeling of reverence for something which he does not understand, but by which he feels constrained to respect, if not to awe"—when one gets the reasons for taking children to church so plainly put, one begins to feel that at last that *rara avis*, a straightforward cleric, is met with in the flesh. Unquestionably the advice given above is sound—from the standpoint of the priest. All it asserts is that religion, in civilised nations, is not a matter of intellectual instruction; it is a question of awakening certain sentiments, establishing particular prejudices in favor of specific customs, and then trusting to these prejudices will be strong enough to resist the influence of knowledge afterwards acquired. It is a policy that all the Churches have followed so long as circumstances permitted; and one is bound to admit that they were all wise in their generation in not trusting religious opinions to the educated reason of the adult.

Now, I am quite willing to admit that a policy of creating sentiments in favor of certain beliefs not *wholly* understood by the child is legitimate enough in its proper sphere. We do not wait until the child is old enough to appreciate the full bearings of all the virtues to give it some ethical instruction. We do seek to bring out certain latent tendencies for good, and suppress active ones of a disagreeable nature, and thus fashion the child's feelings in a required direction. But it is plain that this policy is only defensible so long as there exists a tolerably uniform agreement concerning the *social* benefits of the course pursued, or, at least, that its social benefit can be established against hostile criticism. We impress upon children the duty of honesty in action and speech, in spite of an oft-manifested tendency in a contrary direction. But this is not only not done to create a feeling of "strangeness and difference," or to excite "reverence for something which he does not understand," but it is taught distinctly to create a feeling of community of interest, while the child that can receive instruction in such matters can also be brought to understand the reason for the instruction, although perhaps not grasping it in its full measure.

But with religious instruction the case is altogether different. Here not only does the mystery continue in spite of the advance in years in understanding, but it is impossible for the parent to justify its being forced upon the child's mind as he can justify instruction in other matters. However confident people may feel concerning their religious opinions, the educated ones, at least, will admit that they are open to doubt. They *may* be right, but they *may* be wrong, and there is clearly a wide difference between training a child to regard as valuable actions or feelings the validity of which may be demonstrated at any time, and teaching it to regard as certain teachings which all admit cannot be demonstrated to be so. In the one case, we are training a child for its future welfare; in the other, we are forcing upon it our own speculations upon matters concerning which no

* Those who are inclined to follow this subject further will find much information in Sully's *Studies of Childhood*.

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common agreement exists—surely an altogether unwarrantable exercise of parental power.

But the more serious objection to religious instruction is that it does not constitute a part of real education at all. To confuse the understanding is not to instruct, nor is mystification a good method of enlightenment. A good teacher seeks to make his pupil independent of him, a priest to keep him dependent upon him for guidance. Rational education seeks to convince, religion merely instructs. The former aims chiefly at training the reason and exciting a love of inquiry; the latter lulls reason to sleep and regards inquiry as always more or less reprehensible. The whole process of examination and criticism is hostile to the thoroughly religious mind, and is never entertained save under protest. As a French writer remarks:—

> "Whoever endeavors to examine a dogma is close upon the point of contradicting it, and the priest who regards contradiction as a failure in faith is always obliged, in the nature of things, to avoid an examination of it, to interdict a certain number of questions, to take refuge in mystery. When a priest has filled a brain with faith, he seals it. Doubt and investigation, which are the life of philosophy, the priest regards as a mark of distrust and suspicion, as a sin, as an impiety; he lifts his eyes to heaven at the bare notion of anybody's thinking for himself."

After all, the principal part of a sound education is not *what* a child learns, it is the temper of mind induced by his training, the habits formed, the custom of finding sound reasons for beliefs, of accepting no statement upon mere authority, and of cultivating the habits of criticising freely, and without prejudice, all with which he comes into contact. Given these habits of mind, and the future is assured; without them the child becomes the easy dupe of all who are acute enough to play upon his nature.

The child is the raw material out of which the churches and chapels manufacture their future patrons. He carries with him to these places developed habits, the seeds of which were sown in his impressionable childhood. Hence the struggle of the priests of all religions to get control first of the child. Having secured this as a start, the rest is tolerably easy. The tenacity of early impressions is notorious: the man dying in delirium babbles of his childhood's days; the criminal dying on the gallows has his mind carried back to the simple lessons received at his mother's knee; and, similarly, the religious lessons received during extreme youth seldom, perhaps never, entirely disappear. We may not always be conscious of their force, but they are there, like the scar of a wound long since received.

But the child is also the raw material out of which our future citizen is fashioned, and therefore the struggle between the religious instructor and the scientific teacher is more than a mere contest of opinion—it is a struggle for the direction of civilisation. The question at issue is a simple, but a profoundly important, one. It is whether the developing mind of the child is to be directed by agencies which, however imperfect, have raised man from barbarism to civilisation, and placed him a monarch where he once cringed as a slave, or by a priesthood whose sole consistency has been in striving by every means in its power to retard the development of all that is most dignified and lovable in human nature.

C. Cohen.

Jamrelites.

The Jamrelites, let us say at once, are a religious sect. They have their origin in America—that fruitful birthplace of many religious crazes, and many staggering fictions, fads, and invaluable inventions. The output of the States in the way of religious cranks exceeds that of any other portion of the globe. Russia runs it close, but America takes the palm. Great Britain does its best, but our soil is sadly lacking in this kind of fertility. We seem to be too conservative, too unimaginative, too much afraid of ridicule, too dull, self-contained, proud, and reserved.

If a startling religious sensation is good enough to come our way, dropping, as it were, on our doorstep, we fight shy of it. It might be a bombshell, judging by the wide berth we give it. We stick to the old order of things, the old institutions, even such a monumental anachronism as the Established Church. Our American cousins, on the other hand, are constantly being struck with some new sectarian idea. And it is not to their discredit that they seize upon it, and play it up for all it is worth. Why shouldn't they? Variety and novelty are the spice of life. New ideas, theories, contrivances, even new sects, are welcome if they seem to indicate advance, or, failing that, if they afford amusement.

With a spirit of fullest toleration, the Freethinker marks the advent of the various new religious communities. What widely-different versions there are of the revelation of God's will to man! Each addition to the long procession is at perfect liberty, so far as the Freethinker is concerned, to take its place and follow up, with its banners flying and its drums beating. He has taken his seat as a mere spectator, and, with more or less interest, he watches the sectarian battalions as they file past. Even in regard to the processionists, who are most outlandish and obviously insane, he is inclined to "forbid them not." He understands, for so they tell him, that of such is the kingdom of heaven; and then he desires less than ever to go to the place whither they are bound.

The Jamrelites are one of the newest sects. Up till recently the sect called "The Holy Ghost and Us" occupied the field as the latest novelty in the way of religious mania. Its very name is an achievement of imbecility. But the Jamrelites beat that little crowd hollow. The Jamrelites have gone one better than any other set of pious cranks who have ever preceded them. It is a pity that more information about them is not immediately available. But we know that their prophets fix a near date for the end of the world, and that the sect are said to be arranging to migrate to Scotland. They believe that they are to ascend heavenwards from a Scotch mountain.

We have heard before of the pleasant little fancy that the end of the world is immediately at hand. Christ thought the end was near in his time, and so did his disciples, and so have hundreds of fanatics since their day, right down to the present generation. The cry of "Wolf" has been raised so often that the majority of people are indisposed to pay any attention to it. Of course, there might, some fine day, be a sudden stop put in some way or another to our planetary existence. Who knows? The Jamrelites say they know all about it—that not only is a speedy wind-up possible, but they have special information as to the time, or somewhere about the time, when it will occur.

Scientists do not perceive any ground for present apprehension. They give us—in a kindly way for which we cannot be too grateful—a few more millions of years in which to live. That period will serve. We may go on making our contracts, taking up our leases, marrying and giving in marriage, with some confidence that these time-arrangements will be carried out, and that our progeny will continue to find a foothold on Mother Earth as long as they want it. The Jamrelites will, if we are not mistaken, have time to increase their numbers, to build tabernacles, to pension and bury their prophets, and to put all their affairs straight before the Judgment trumpet sounds.

But what about this proposed invasion of Scotland? Do our "brither Scots" know that they are soon to entertain latter-day angels on their hospitable Hielans? Do they know that, of all the habitable portions of the globe, their "Land o' Cakes" has been selected for this exceptionally high distinction? It is well that they should have timely information of what is awaiting them, for more reasons than one. The Campbells—no, the Jamrelites are coming, and hotel tariffs had better at once be revised. The Jamrelites may be expected to bring some "siller" with them, and to spend it, for of what use will it be to them, puir bodies? In a very short time they will want it no more. They will go to the top of a Scotch mountain, and, according to their expectations, vanish in a Scotch mist.

The whole thing appears to be a trifle misty, but that is no reason why something should not be made out of these uninvited visitors. They are Yanks, and probably 'cute; but Scotland stands not where it did if they do

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not encounter within its borders folks as canny as themselves. The main thing will be for the Scottish people, in the vicinity of whatever high mountain is selected, to keep their eye on the Jamrelites, and, after clearing their pockets, be prepared to hang on to their coat-tails when the critical hour arrives.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Fallacies of Spiritualism.

(Concluded from page 676.)

THE most seductive fallacy associated with Spiritualism is what is termed the "evidential argument," or the "facts of testimony." It is urged that various persons who have seen certain supposed spiritual phenomena have given their testimony in favor of the reality of the manifestations they witnessed. The force of this allegation rests entirely upon what is meant by "spiritual phenomena." If they are the operation of a natural law, why call them spiritual? If they are something that is not natural, what are they? This point must be settled before the Spiritualistic claim can be fairly discussed. The important question is not only, Have certain phenomena occurred? but, What produced them?

The evidence given in favor of any theory should be supported either by consciousness, induction of reason, or personal testimony. Consciousness requires self-evident truths; but the alleged truths of Spiritualism are purely subjective, and are recognised only by the few, and then when their discerning faculties are in an abnormal state. Hence we find that the impressions made upon the minds of Spiritualists are contradictory, which would not be the case if the supposed facts of Spiritualism were self-evident. Neither can the induction of reason be of any evidential value to Spiritualists, inasmuch as reason has failed to discover the nature of the assumed spirit, or to differentiate between it and the material existence. Testimony, therefore, is the only evidence left to support the claims of Spiritualism. Now, the evidential value of testimony depends not only upon the honesty, but also upon the ability, of those who testify. Men like Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall, having seen any particular phenomenon, would be better able to form a sound judgment as to its nature and cause than, for instance, General Booth and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. These latter may be equally honest, but they do not possess the same ability to form an accurate opinion as to the cause or causes of the phenomenon they saw.

Nothing is more fallacious than to accept the truth of any theory, even upon the testimony of men who are well informed upon general subjects. Persons of more than average ability have testified that witchcraft is true, that the earth is flat, and that a personal Devil exists. Yet such views are discarded to-day, and are looked upon as errors and delusions of an ignorant and credulous past. There is, moreover, the fact to be remembered that all men are liable to be deceived, and in connection with Spiritualism the deception has been extensive. Thousands were deceived by the clever tricks of the Fox family, the Davenport brothers, and such mediums as Slade and "Dr." Monk. Spiritualists were in ecstasy in 1847 at the marvellous manifestations of the two Fox girls, but ultimately, through the confession of one who had been in their confidence, the whole affair was proved to be a deception. Both of the Davenport brothers, after making a little fortune, renounced Spiritualism, and one of them admitted that their performance was "the result of trickery and dexterity." The exposure of Slade and "Dr." Monk was so complete that the former had to leave the country, and the latter, after his imprisonment, retired from public life.* Even the two scientists, Wallace and Crookes, were victims of deception. Frank Podmore, M.A., in his *Studies in Psychical Research* (p. 93), shows how Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace was deluded by so-called spirit photography. He believed in its genuineness until Mrs. Sedgwick proved that the affair was a fraud. On page 111 of the same work Podmore points out that the mediums, Miss Cook and Mrs. Fay, with whom Mr. Crookes experimented, were detected in their trickery. It may be said that these instances of deception do not prove Spiritualism to be a fallacy, for the reason that dishonest people are found associated with all professions. Supposing this be so, that does not affect the object of my citing the above cases of delusion. That object is to indicate that even eminent men may be misled, and therefore their testimony is not sufficient to establish the truth of that to which they testify.

Spiritualists claim that the fact of one or two scientists accepting their theory is a proof of its truth. It does not, however, follow that, if a scientist be an authority in his special profession, therefore his opinion upon other questions is equally reliable. The real point at issue is this: Are scientific facts favorable or otherwise to the claims of Spiritualism? My contention is that they are not. Science is based upon demonstrated truths, discovered through the fullest examination of every subject within its province. As Spencer says:—

> "Men of science subject the result of their inquiries to the most searching examination.....and conclusive testimony is to be found in the daily verification of scientific predictions."

This is the very opposite to the method adopted by Spiritualists. Their theory is based upon emotional speculation, and their inquiry is limited by protective conditions. Dr. Helen Densmore, a prominent Spiritualist, admits that scientific conditions retard and destroy spiritual phenomena (*Light*, June 25, 1898). The fact is, to ascribe any effect to aught else but the natural is so absurd that Sir W. Crookes, in his Presidential Address at the British Association of 1898, candidly confessed that he put a naturalistic explanation upon Spiritualistic phenomena.

If the Spiritualists have a desire for the testimony of scientists, the following may interest them. The late Mr. Proctor, in his journal, *Knowledge* (October 1, 1888), published the following:—

> "Professor Lester F. Ward says that, 'So far as science can speak on the subject, consciousness persists as long as the organised brain, and no longer.' Professor E. S. Morse writes: 'I have never yet seen anything in the discoveries of science which would, in the slightest degree, support or strengthen a belief in immortality.' Professor Tyndall, in a lecture on 'Science and Man,' in the Town Hall, Birmingham, in 1877, said: 'But to return to the hypothesis of a human soul, offered as an explanation or simplification of a series of obscure phenomena. Adequate reflection shows that, instead of introducing light into our minds, it increases our darkness. You do not, in this case, explain the unknown in terms of the known, which is the method of science, but you explain the unknown in terms of the more unknown.'"

Professor Graham, in his *Creed of Science*, gives the following summary of modern scientific opinion as to a future life:—

> "And now what is the scientific doctrine of the great theme of immortality? Is there any hope for man? In one word, No. For any such hope, if men must continue to indulge in it after hearing the scientific arguments, they must go elsewhere—to the theologian, the metaphysician, the mystic, the poet. These men, habitually dwelling in their several spheres of illusion and unreality, may find suggestions of the phantasy, which they persuade themselves are arguments in favor of a future life; the man of science, for his part, and the positive thinker, building on science, consider no proposition more certain than that the soul is mortal as well as the body which supported it, and of which it was merely the final flower and product.....Our modern physiologist has ascertained that thought is but a function of the brain and nerves. Why should it not perish with these?.....Why should it not collapse with the general break-up of the machinery? Why should it not cease when no longer supported by the various physical energies whose transformations within the bodily machine alone made its existence possible?.....But Science, for her part, finds no grounds for the beliefs of theology or metaphysics in a future life—beliefs, moreover, which she regards as little comforting at the best.....Science, we think, has made out the dependence of our mind and present consciousness on bodily conditions, so far as to justify the conclusion that the dissolution of the body carries with it the dissolution of our present consciousness and memory, which are reared on the bodily basis" (pp. 148-9, 154, and 179).

The sentimental fallacy that Spiritualism is a kind of precautionary belief as to a future existence needs but a few words. Our opinions do not affect the reality in

* See the useful work, *The Supernatural*, written by Dr. Lionel A. Weatherly and J. M. Maskelyne.

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the slightest degree. If, when we are dead, we are to sleep for ever, we shall so sleep whatever our views thereon may be. Personally, I have no fear. To me death means the cessation of life and the anodyne of repose. In the beautiful language of Colonel Ingersoll: "Next to eternal joy, next to being for ever with those we love and those who have loved us—next to that, is to be wrapt in the dreamless drapery of eternal peace. Next to eternal life is eternal sleep. Upon the shadowy shore of death the sea of trouble casts no wave. Eyes that have been curtained by the everlasting dark will never know again the burning touch of tears. Lips touched by eternal silence will never speak again the broken words of grief. Hearts of dust do not break. The dead do not weep. Within the tomb no veiled and weeping sorrow sits, and in the rayless gloom is crouched no shuddering fear." CHARLES WATTS.

Pioneers in Prison.

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage."—LOVELACE.

"You see how this world goes!" is one of poor, raving King Lear's incoherent and pregnant exclamations, in one of the greatest tragedies penned by the master-hand of Shakespeare. Gloster says he sees it feelingly. Lear tells him, in reply, a man may see how this world goes with no eyes, which is sightless Gloster's case.

> "Look with thine ears: see how yon justice rails upon yon simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: Change places, and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?"

Lear ever, in his ramblings, gives terse, pungent, mordant expression to thoughts extraordinary for acuteness and depth. But he seldom, among them all, surpasses this transformation scene, in respect to suggestive import and vivid presentment.

The anomaly is explained by the history of religion. Read the story of the "judicial" murder of heretics, Jews, and "witches." Read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. See through how many ages independence of mind was killed off and servility fostered. For many centuries Europe was given up to the Church as a sheep to the shearers. With thumbscrew in hand, and calumny on the tongue's tip, the "Bride of Christ" did her damnable work. Thus it happens that some prison records are bright spots on the scroll of history. Thus there is an unfortunate affinity between pioneers and prisons. Many of the noblest men in history suffered long and cruel incarceration within the grim walls of prisons for their devotion to science or liberty. Prisons have thus not infrequently been glorified by the halo of the martyr. How many brave soldiers of the Army of Human Liberation have rotted in gaols! How many men of genius have solaced their weary, imprisoned hours with their pens, learning in suffering what they taught in literature!

The ancient priesthood commenced the accursed work of persecution. In far-off Athens Socrates solaced his solitary prison hours with philosophical pursuits before he drank the hemlock among his sorrowing disciples. The Christian priests frequently dispensed with the mockery of a trial, and, as in the case of the beautiful and unfortunate Hypatia, resorted to murder, pure and simple. Galileo, when he was old and poor, suffered in the Roman dungeon, and Roger Bacon was on two occasions imprisoned—once for a period of ten years—on the common charge of heresy and magic. Yet he, too, like Galileo, had the noble audacity to disturb the contented, pious ignorance of his contemporaries with ideas of discoveries that were to be realized after his death.

Nor can we forget that the hapless Giordano Bruno—perhaps the greatest martyr of all—suffered the horrors of a cruel imprisonment before his tragic end at the hands of the hired assassins of the great lying Catholic Church. Thomas Paine was another fine illustration in point. To relieve the tedium of the loneliness during his captivity in prison he composed part of the well-known *Age of Reason*, a work for which many brave men afterwards suffered imprisonment. It was while in the Bastille that Voltaire sketched and composed the greater part of *The Henriade*, a tribute to Henry of Navarre. The priests were always anxious to arrest Voltaire; but, thanks to his influence and position, he always evaded their eager clutches. Richard Carlile, his family, and associates had more than their share in the pains and penalties of daring to plead for liberty of speech. Carlile himself suffered nine and a-half years' imprisonment for championing the liberty of the press. His family and shopmen divided amongst them about fifty years' confinement. Think of it! One small circle of acquaintances serving between them sixty years in prison. That genial poet and essayist, Leigh Hunt, calmly endured two years' captivity for his satirical libel upon the Prince Regent, afterwards George the Fourth, of so indifferent memory that to call him a beast is to use the language of flattery. Thomas Cooper, the Chartist, was no stranger to the interior of a gaol. His *Purgatory of Suicides* was another instance of mind triumphing over captivity. Ernest Jones also belongs to the illustrious roll of men who have, by the resources of genius, converted a prison into a palace.

One of the most noteworthy of prisoners was "honest John Bunyan." He was not a Freethinker, but he spent twelve years of his life in Bedford Gaol for non-conformity. He wrote part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* while there. When a Quaker came to visit Bunyan, and declared, in his snuffling way, that the Lord had ordered him to search for John in half the prisons of England, he replied: "If the Lord had sent you, you need not have taken so much trouble to find me; for the Lord knows that I have been a prisoner in Bedford Gaol for the last twelve years."

It is a singular coincidence that the authors of two of the most popular books ever written should have been, not only contemporaries and of the same nationality, but both imprisoned in the same country. Strictly speaking, Daniel Defoe did not write *Robinson Crusoe* while he was imprisoned, although other works of his prolific pen were undoubtedly born of his captivity. Cervantes, a greater writer than Bunyan or "Unabashed" Defoe, and one of the foremost writers of the world, was held captive by the Moors for five years. The record of his terrible hardships and sufferings displays the courage and magnanimity of Cervantes in an eminent degree. On his subsequent escape and return to Spain he was again imprisoned. During this confinement it was that he devised and commenced his immortal work, *Don Quixote*, a work which has permanently added to the gaiety of nations.

Among the host of noble names of those who have suffered imprisonment we can refer to a few only, such as Selden, Penn, Pepys, and Sidney, who were confined in the Tower of London. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, George Wither, and Lovelace, the Cavalier poet, composed some of their happiest songs in prison.

Who can con over the names just mentioned without a feeling of pity and sympathy for their privations and sufferings, as well as respect for their high intellectual endowments? Among these men are to be found some of the chief benefactors of mankind. It is they who touch us to finer issues, give us better aims than the accumulation of money, and teach us to withstand the sovereignty of Unreason on the earth. Pity that from all their conquests, so rich in benefit to others, they should reap so little themselves.

> From our plaudits greatly fled,
> They with diviner silence dwell instead;
> And, far beyond our vision and our hail,
> Are heard for ever, and are seen no more.

MIMNERMUS.

The Brave.

Stand not aloof nor apart,
Plunge in the thick of the fight;
There in the street and the mart,
That is the place to do right.
Not in some cloister or cave,
Not in some kingdom above,
Here, on this side of the grave,
Here should we labor and love.

—*Ella Wheeler Wilcox.*

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Acid Drops.

WINE, according to the Bible, cheereth God and man. Jehovah himself, therefore, as well as the French, ought to be happy over the extraordinary bountiful wine-crop in fair Gallia this year. Grapes were so plentiful that in some districts they only realised fifty shillings per ton, and the plethora of grape-juice that had to be stored caused an immense rise in the price of casks. It is to be regretted, in the interest of temperance, that French wines are not more accessible to Englishmen. The initial cost of wine is very little more than that of beer; it is the heavy duty, over and above the cost of maturing, that makes it so expensive in this country. The total consumption of wine in France is one thousand million gallons per annum; the total consumption in England is only sixteen million gallons. Less ardent spirits and more wine would be a great improvement. Even the teetotallers might rejoice at a decreased consumption of alcohol.

Take a little wine for thy stomach's sake, said Paul to Timothy. We dare say Timothy liked the prescription. But some of the thorough-going Bible Temperance people (so it is said) declare that Paul meant the wine for external application. It was to be rubbed in. Ordinary people, however, will be apt to think that it would operate more effectually inside.

Coventry Patmore, the poet, Roman Catholic as he was, had less objection to "infidels" than to some members of his own Church. He seems to have despised and detested the much-praised Cardinal Manning—a man whose face, by the way, was worthy of a Grand Inquisitor. This is how Patmore spoke of him in a letter to Woolner, the sculptor, and author of some delicate poetry: "Poor Manning! It is wonderful how he imposed on mankind by the third-century look of him, and his infinite muddle-headedness, which passed for mystery. I knew him very well, and am convinced that he was the very minutest soul that ever buzzed in so high a place. He was a good man according to his *capacity*, but he hated all men whom he suspected of being able to take his measure."

Mr. John Burns has earned the name on the London County Council of the "Sabbatarian Agnostic." It was created for him by Mr. Radford, on account of his attitude towards Sunday music and Sunday recreations. There was a proposal before the Council to spend £289 in forming a pond "for dog bathing and model yachting" on Tooting Common. Lord Ribbesdale wondered how the dogs and the yachts would get on together. Mr. Radford, still more sarcastically, supposed the dogs would not be permitted to bathe on Sundays. It was a hit, a palpable hit, after the discussion over Sunday football at Hackney Marsh. Mr. Burns, however, being ready at retort, exclaimed: "Oh, that's all right; the Tooting dogs are of High Church tendency." But the retort was not particularly felicitous. It was wanting in delicacy as well as dexterity.

Dr. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, was one of the speakers at the annual meeting of the Wolverhampton auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. In the course of his address he referred to the picture of Queen Victoria presenting an African chief with a Bible as "The secret of England's greatness." He said that this picture made a great impression upon him in his youth. It would have been more to the purpose if he had told the meeting that the story which this picture illustrates is a fable, which was authoritatively contradicted many years ago. The Queen never presented an African chief with a Bible, and never told him it was the secret of England's greatness. It would not have mattered in the court of reason if she had, but these Bible people know that the Queen is a good card to play in the game of bamboozling the ignorant and unwary. So they stick to that apocryphal old "Chief and Bible" story as gospel, and work that apocryphal old picture for all it is worth.

The Rev. Dr. Kerr, of Glasgow, seems to be just a few generations behind his time, and, what is worse for him, does not appear to be aware of the fact. He writes, apparently in all innocence, to the Rev. Professor Dods, who has been lecturing on the Higher Criticism, and requests him to "indicate some of the passages of the Word of God where errors and discrepancies may be found." He says he has hitherto professed belief in the infallibility and divine authority of the Bible.

In reply, the Rev. Professor Dods expresses a natural surprise that he should be asked for information which can be found in at least a hundred easily accessible volumes. He refers his correspondent to Carpenter's *Synoptic Gospels*, Gilbert's *Life of Jesus*, Snell's *Gain or Loss*, any of Schwartzkopff's books, and, indeed, any critical work on the Scriptures. Dr. Kerr, however, is not satisfied with these references; he wants chapter and verse.

Professor Dods, in a further letter, says that he has indicated where all the information asked for can be found, and he declines to enter into a controversy with one who apparently is well acquainted with the subject and has already made up his mind. Someone should forward Dr. Kerr, of Queen-square, Glasgow, one or two of the works advertised in the Freethought Publishing Company's list. He would then find plenty of material to consider and reply to if he can.

"If Sunday trading is allowed to go on, then surely Scotland is doomed." That is the conclusion arrived at by Mr. J. McRae, who writes to the *Glasgow Herald*. We didn't know that Scotland was in any special danger from Sunday trading. If it is so, it is not for the want of numerous manifestations of Sabbatarian bigotry. Perhaps, after all, Scotland will survive, as we hope that Sunday trading will, where it meets legitimate and urgent needs, and is quite voluntary on the part of the traders.

Anybody who wants to get about in Edinburgh on Sunday, and does not want to walk all the way, has to hire a cab. Of course the well-to-do can afford this expense, but common folk are not so fortunate. They have to turn tramps on the blessed Sabbath. The cable cars are not allowed to run, and the leading men—particularly those who can float about in Disraeli's street-gondola—are nearly all for keeping up this restriction. One municipal candidate, in defending it, said he was "fond of the dear old Scottish Sunday." No doubt it is "dear" enough as well as "old." It is old enough to be dead and buried, and dear enough to be abolished by an economical people like the Scotch.

Rev. Mr. Delafield, according to the *Grays and Tilbury Gazette*, has accepted what we suppose is a clear call from the Lord. He goes from Grays, where the living is worth £160 a year, to Little Thurrock, where the living is worth £360 a year. The "platform of usefulness" is smaller at Little Thorruck, our contemporary says, and broadly hints that the man of God ought to have stopped where there were most souls to be saved. That is all very well, in its way; but, if men of God were to be judged by their professions, how many of them would stand such a test? Poverty is the first virtue of a Christian, according to the Sermon on the Mount, and something like destitution should be the first virtue of an apostle.

There is a living worth £300 a year which has gone begging. It is at Pelton, near Chester-le-Street. The place is one of the most forbidding in the kingdom. Everything about it is blackened with coal dust. Even the very sheep are in mourning. To crown all, the church is of the ugliest description. No man of God could be found to accept £300 a year in such conditions, and souls were going regularly to hell from that parish without an attempt being made to save them; until at last the patron, who is in holy orders, has been obliged to take the job on himself.

The Evesham Guardians, by nine votes to seven, have declined to allow the Salvation Army to send religious literature to the workhouse inmates. Parsonic influence, of course, is at the bottom of this petty prohibition. The chaplain does not want his pauper flock interfered with. They are his special preserve, and Salvationist poachers are warned off. The Evesham Guardians would have done well if they had disfavored the clerical exclusiveness.

Why shouldn't Salvationist literature be sent to the inmates? Many of the aged recipients are probably unable to read it even with the aid of their "specs." That, or any other literature of the kind, is always useful for pipe-lights. There is no earthly reason why solicitous Boothites should not send their tracts to the poor caged-up creatures, who must be glad of anything that breaks the monotony of their dull existence. The paupers are not obliged to read the literature, and, if they do read it, it doesn't much matter. Ordinary illustrated newspapers would, of course, be more acceptable. Something of a pictorial kind seems to be especially preferred. Even a picture of the "Last Supper" or the "Babe in a Manger" is something for the poor folks to look at, and ponder over, if they please. Myths of that kind seem to suit childhood and senile decay.

Personal visits paid by sectarian fanatics are decidedly objectionable, and, for various reasons, should be discountenanced. They are an intrusion which must often be an annoyance, and, with the weaker pauper "vessels," are calculated to encourage hypocrisy more than anything else.

Common-sense people would also object to literature of the "Prepare-to-meet-thy-God" type being showered on the beds of sick folks whose temperature is already many degrees too high. The sniffs of hell which are piously induced in hospitals and infirmaries are responsible for sending many a fever-stricken sufferer to his grave long before his time. Still, with the poor pauper folks who are not absolutely ill there is

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no more need why protection should be set up on their behalf against Salvationist literature any more than against the chaplain's ministrations, which, as a rule, are tedious and tiresome to the last degree, if they happen to be nothing worse.

Upwards of fifty children have been tortured and butchered in the recent Chinese trouble. That is a serious fact to be recorded against ill-directed missionary zeal. Why should women and children be exposed to these terrible dangers? That question may well be submitted to the Exeter Hall howlers who wisely stay at home. There seems to be, at any rate, one sane person in the religious camp. He is the acting Chaplain to the Forces at Winchester. He says missionaries have no right to marry. And, very properly, he protests against the "senseless and useless sacrifice of the lives of children in the mission-field."

The financial condition of the London Missionary Society is by no means satisfactory. So we are informed by a highly respectable religious print. Events in China seem to have affected its funds. So we can readily believe. Its supporters are urged to greater "self-sacrificing efforts." But why isn't it assisted from on High? If it has the "blessing of the Lord," why doesn't the Lord help it? It is particularly his concern, quite as much as watching the sparrows that fall. Who knows? Perhaps he is a little bit disgusted with the whole business.

The *Examiner*—not the old *Examiner* as we knew it, but a Congregationalist print which has "conveyed" to itself a time-honored name without acquiring a semblance of the high tone and brilliance of its defunct namesake—is pleased to talk, in its latest issue, of "ignorant animadversions" on foreign missions. Well, we suppose that facts about foreign missions are open to all—they constitute information which is not the exclusive possession of the *Examiner*. The conclusions to be drawn from that information are clear enough to other people than those who contribute to the deadly-dull pages of the *Examiner*. They point to the fact that foreign missions are a failure, a hopeless effort, an abortive enterprise—which terms, curiously enough, are exactly applicable to the *Examiner* itself as a newspaper venture.

The Europeanisation of Japan proceeds apace, according to the latest advices of the *Topical Times*. "The sale of beer in Japan is said to continue to increase rapidly year after year." The consumption of Bibles doesn't quite keep pace with the development of the beer trade; but it is sufficiently brisk to show that, if the Japanese persevere, they may eventually make their country as pleasant a place to live in as Bethnal Green.

The Bishop of London some time ago started a fund for the building of new churches for the spiritual needs of the inhabitants of London and the suburbs. Meanwhile, the report of church people themselves is that the present churches are not nearly a quarter filled by their Sunday congregations. A church working-man—what a funny fellow he must be to look at!—writes to a religious contemporary as follows: "My work has necessitated a frequent change of residence in different parts of this great city. East, west, north, and south of London I have found our church services almost deserted by working-men. In churches capable of seating from 700 to 1,500 you will find on an average 20 men there, and in some not so many. In order to be quite sure and up to date, I have devoted a Sunday for the last six or seven weeks to visiting the Mother churches in some of the largest parishes in this huge London of ours, some of them literally teeming with the working-classes, and, alas! I find that I have over-estimated their church attendance."

The Church Congress undertakes to talk every year upon a variety of subjects. Somehow it seems always to miss what are really the principal topics—the crying evils of the day. We take up our copy of the most respectable *Rock*, and we notice a letter complaining that at the recent Church Congress no reference was made to Stock Exchange gambling and the "soulless commercialism of the age." The writer supplies the explanation. "I fear," he says, "that the cause of this is that many clergymen and laymen are interested in companies that are run on the Stock Exchange." Of course they are. Many company promoters specially fish for clergymen.

The biggest gudgeons in the eternal grab for wealth are notoriously the inhabitants of rural vicarages and rectories. This is "selling all and giving to the poor," and "laying not up for yourselves treasures on earth." Against their expectations, the clerical "mugs" sometimes sell nearly all, and give it to a rotten scheme, and the treasures they lay up for themselves are often money-lenders' writs. Meanwhile, they are so occupied with prospectuses that they have to buy ready-written sermons. Their congregations—or rather the wealthier members of them—do not care about that. They are almost certainly oblivious, dead, and dull to all they hear, because, for them, sermon-time is perhaps the most peaceful period available for reflection on their own financial position and speculations. They turn it over in their minds whether stocks will go up or down, and by the time the parson has finished they have perhaps finally decided whether to sell out or "hold on."

A North Shields Salvationist has had an order made upon him to maintain his wife, whom he had deserted. He seems to have treated the poor woman with exceptional cruelty. He deserted her because, after an operation, she became a confirmed invalid, and subsequently it was alleged he took up his habitation with a woman who was also a member of the Salvation Army. He denied any cohabitation with this woman, but the magistrates decided that there was desertion, and, in addition to ordering him to make an allowance to his wife, removed the children from his custody.

"I am only gone to live with Jesus," wrote Gertrude Lenton before drowning herself in the canal at Bedworth. Most Christians say they believe this sort of thing, but few are in a hurry to realise it. This poor suicide was an exception. We may add that she further wrote: "Have my portrait taken, and give all the teachers of the Sunday School one." Even a Talmage could hardly make out that she was an Atheist—as all suicides are, or ought to be, according to that reverend gentleman.

What nonsense religionists will talk! Here is Mr. G. Harwood, M.P., for instance, opening a debate on "Religion and Science" at the Ancoats Art Museum, and explaining that we can understand immortality now by thinking of the human soul as a force, and bearing in mind that all force is indestructible. Well, if the human soul is a force, why is not the tiger soul a force, and the shark soul, and the flea soul? These too must be indestructible, and we shall meet them all again in the next world. What a prospect! Try again, Mr. Harwood; try again.

According to Mr. Lucien Wolf, in the *Jewish Chronicle*, the late Marquis of Bute was extremely well acquainted with the historical side of sorcery, astrology, and other vagaries of the mediæval mind. His collection of Inquisition manuscripts, dealing with trials for magic, heresy, and Judaism, was unique. Perhaps he made very little public use of them out of a tender regard to Holy Mother Church. It is to be hoped, though, that his collection may be used by some honest and candid historian. After all, it is the *details* of trials, tortures, and executions, not the general recitals of them in the orthodox fashion, that give us a real idea of the ignorance, folly, and brutality of our Christian forefathers. They had Christianity enough, and to spare. What they wanted was knowledge, common sense, and common humanity.

The Hesketh-Prichard expedition is after the giant sloth, which, it is believed, will be found in Patagonia. Mr. Prichard offers £5,000 for a true specimen. Poor old Noah had to start from Central Asia and hunt down to a couple for that floating menagerie, and nobody paid him as much as 5,000 halfpence.

Let no one buy the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. It has fatal defects. The Rev. E. Mansel Townshend has discovered that "the prevailing scepticism and irreverential higher criticism" have laid hold of the editors. To come to details, he finds that the patriarchs are treated as "mythical or fabulous persons." Well, after that, the *Encyclopædia* should be irretrievably discredited. It isn't safe to have it in one's home.

The inhabitants of a parish in one of our British West Indies thought they would build their church on the side of a cliff overlooking the sea, and a wonderfully pretty situation it was. Many a time have visitors sat there gazing over the deep-blue waters of the Atlantic, feeling at peace with all mankind. But later on a railway was constructed right at the foot of the cliff, and experts said that in time the vibrations would weaken the foundations of the church, and then it must go. Still, worshippers went there Sunday after Sunday, but nothing happened, and then the end came. There was an hotel not many yards away, and one night the residents went to sleep as usual, their last gaze upon the outer world being upon the church, with the blue sea beyond, all bathed in the bright light of a tropic moon. In the morning they looked forth upon vacancy. The sea was there, as blue as ever, but the little church had vanished from sight. Alas! the good God that it was built for had also gone to sleep.

"Have you given thanks to God to-day for the use of your reason?" said a stranger, as he planted himself suddenly in front of a passenger in the street. Taken aback, and somewhat overawed by the abrupt but solemn manner of the interrogator, the citizen answered in all simplicity: "I confess

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I have not." "Go then, and do so instantly," continued the maniac, "for I have lost mine."

This story doesn't seem to be complete. The person accosted should have laid hold of the lunatic and dragged him aside, and asked: "Is it because you are mad that you recommend me to give thanks to God? If I am to thank God for my sanity, what am I am to say to him about your insanity? Thank him again or curse him? Which would you do?"

At Capradossa, the other day, Don Augusto Floridi, the priest of that village, died in consequence of a wound inflicted by a Mr. Nunziati, who, according to *L'Ordine* of Ancona, had thus avenged his sister's honor. The deceased priest, after having seduced Nunziati's sister, had procured a miscarriage, and the priest had buried the child in his cellar, where it was found by the police.

While reading a psalm at a service in the Zion Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Wrexham, one of the class leaders named John Jones suddenly dropped down dead.

One of the most renowned lenders of money to clergymen, Edward Shuckburg, of Bristol, has come to grief in the Bankruptcy Court. It does not appear whether his failure is due to over-confidence in the men of God; anyhow, his liabilities are £1,500.

Studies by the Way is the title of a new volume of Essays by the Right Honorable Sir Edward Fry, one of her Majesty's judges. In one of them he writes as follows:—"The Old Testament is full of doctrine which is positively opposed to our moral conceptions. The Almighty God is represented as tempting men to acts which he afterwards disowns or punishes; deceit is praised rather than truthfulness; barbarous acts of cruelty are narrated without a pang; and the whole Gentile world is regarded as outside the care of its loving Father. How from such stones as these are we to extract any bread for our spiritual life?"

Sir Edward Fry is evidently a Freethinker to a certain extent. We are surprised, however, that he does not go further. In one great respect the New Testament is worse than the Old Testament. Its doctrine of everlasting hell is the consummation of brutality. God's cruelty to his own children is prolonged through all eternity. Not satisfied with torturing them here, as in the Old Testament, he tortures them for ever and ever in an establishment created for the purpose before they were born. It is astonishing that an acute mind, like Sir Edward Fry's, does not perceive this. But it is often the case, that the obvious is the most overlooked.

The Rev. D. MacRae, of St. James's, Wood Green, appears not to be troubled with stringent restrictions in regard to the ethical ideal when "men after God's own heart" are concerned. Preaching the other Sunday to young men and women, he presented the life of Saul to them as a "warning beacon" against the rocks on which they might split. Saul, he said, "did not sin as David did—it would have been better for him if he had—and had been penitent as David was. But to the last he was impenitent." Apparently, according to this preacher, the main thing is not to sin, but, having sinned, to repent of it, which is certainly a novel proposition in ethics.

At the Hospital Sunday Demonstration in Walsall, last week, one of the speakers was the Rev. W. Felton. He said it was a "problem that there should be so much suffering in the world," and he seemed somewhat perplexed by it. Well, it is a problem that has troubled many philosophers who lived long before the Rev. W. Felton's time. But they and he were Theists believing in an omnipotent and benevolent God. That is where the difficulty comes in. The existence of evil presents no such difficulties to the Atheist. The Rev. Felton urges that suffering comes from sin; but that is only pushing the question a step backward, because we still require to know why there should be sin in a world created by Infinite Benevolence.

Bishop Wilson, who seems to be running the Melanesian Mission, told an audience last week whom he was addressing on behalf of missionary enterprise that a little time ago he bought a small island for £12. Now he wants a steamer to run in connection with that and other islands which he or his Church has probably acquired on equally cheap terms. The steamer is to run at the rate of ten knots, and will only cost somewhere about £12,000. The missionaries, he says, are not going to give up their islands; they simply want people at home to subscribe to the preservation and improvement of their property.

Even-handed justice is dealt out strangely to Jews and Christians in Holy Russia. An Odessa correspondent of the *Daily News* gives some remarkable illustrations. A poor orphan Jewess, who could not even remember her parents, was arrested for mendicancy, and sentenced to four years' imprisonment, to be followed by life-long banishment to one of the remote settlements of Eastern Siberia. During the month of her condemnation four murder cases were tried in the same district. They were all flagrant, brutal, and premeditated, but the sentences varied from fifteen months' to five years' hard labor. The murderers were Christians.

Mr. Frank Bullen, lecturing at Camberwell on "Whales and Whale Fishing," a subject on which he is an authority, remarked that there was nothing improbable about the story of Jonah—a subject on which he is *not* an authority. It was only the Greenland whale, he said, that could only swallow a herring. The great sperm whale could have swallowed the whole ship's crew. Well, we rather doubt this, in spite of Mr. Bullen. But, in any case, the great sperm whale does not (we believe) haunt the east Mediterranean, or the Black Sea, or wherever it was that Jonah was taken in out of the wet. Even if Jonah had been swallowed, clothes and all probably, by a convenient whale, the "story" would still be one for the marines. Mr. Bullen should kindly explain how Jonah could have lived for three days in what Robert Taylor called fishguts—though we know the whale is not a true fish. How did he breathe? How did he escape being digested? We lay no stress on his being vomited up at the finish, for if he was alive the poor whale must have been thoroughly sick of him. Still, it must have been a recorn vomit to throw him up on "dry land" from the deep water which whales must swim in.

"In Honour of the Holy Face and Five Wounds of Jesus," the Rev. B. Murray, of Wellingborough, with the blessed approval of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Northampton, is begging people by autograph circular letter to help him "build a sanctuary for the salvation of souls at Rushden," and half promises that a timely subscription from a sinner will make it easier for him in kingdom-come. These begging letters seem to be sent about lavishly and indiscriminately, and there must be a heavy commission on the collection. We don't know much about the holy face of Jesus, but we think the Rev. B. Murray has a lot of *face* "on his own," though it is not exactly *holy*.

"The real educational problem which confronts our statesmen," says Mr. Bernard Shaw in *Fabianism and the Empire*, "is not the struggle of the Church with the Nonconformists for the souls of our elementary scholars, but the establishment of quite new subjects and methods, having for their object the technical training of the public servants who will constitute the executive of the Empire, and the education in citizenship of those upon whose votes their authority will be based." We agree with Mr. Shaw on this matter. But why is it that so many Fabians support the Nonconformist section of soul-savers by standing up for the "Compromise"—that is to say, for the religious education which suits the Chapel party in opposition to the Church party? It is certainly a curious thing to find professed Socialists, who are also reputed to be Agnostics, if not Atheists, doing their utmost to prevent the triumph of Secular Education. Mr. Graham Wallas, one of the ablest Fabians, fought harder than the Rev. Dr. Clifford himself to keep Secular Education off the "Progressive" platform. Yet from all we have heard it seems that Mr. Wallas has just as much belief in religion as we have ourselves.

Br'er Johnson's Experience.

W'EN Br'er Johnson got religion he hollered out so loud,
He shuck de shingles on de roof en tarrified de crowd!
'Peared lak it wuz a yearthquake en de steeple gwine ter fall;
De preacher in de pulpit couldn't keep his feet at all.

Den de preacher quit de 'sputtin' en de 'spoundin' er his views;
De pulpit tumbled over en played leapfrog wid de pews,
En f'um de Amen co'ner we hearn de brotherin' call:
"Have mussy on Br'er Johnson, en have mussy on us all!"

You never see sich capers! De preacher lead de way,
En hollered ez he hit de groun': "I gwine home ter-day!"
Dey warn't no benediction; he had no time fer dat,
Likewise, ter git his walkin'-stick en shiny beaver-hat.

De congregation follered—a-rushin' out dey come,
Whilst Br'er Johnson's voice riz louder dan a rigimint bass drum!
En ez dat voice went rollin' en reachin' fer on high,
'Peared lak it shuck de winders er de mansions in de sky!

He des broke up de meetin'—des laid it on de she'f;
In less dan I kin tell it had de whole house ter hisse'f.
A reg'lar ol'-time Jonah ter de women en de men;
He got religion sartin, but he's simmered down sence den!

—*Atlanta Constitution.*

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 4, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "New Testament Superstitions."

To Correspondents.

Mr. Charles Watts's Engagements.—November 4, Liverpool. —All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. P. Ball.—Many thanks for cuttings.

A. C. Turner.—You can hardly do better than read Büchner's *Force and Matter*, which can be obtained from our publishing office at the "remainder" price of 3s. 6d.—by post (free) 3s. 9d.

N. S. S. Benevolent Fund.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Victoria Park Collection, 5s.

C. Heaton writes: "I should like to see a more generous response to your appeal on behalf of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. There must be hundreds of Freethought working men like myself able to give something. Surely we who have benefited so much from the writings of Rationalists who have helped us to mental freedom ought to do something in return. Many spend a few shillings a week on drink and other things, which they could do without for one week, and give the money to help this Fund. I hope my fellow working men will make an effort to render this Fund a thorough success."

A. T. Hall.—Much obliged, but we knew the facts. You will understand when we say that we are not disposed to advertise the persons concerned.

Young Freethinker.—Pleased to hear from you.

A. F. Bullock.—We regret the oversight. The matter is now attended to.

Ten-Share Tom.—We have no such cases for the *Freethinker*, and we fear there would be very little useful demand for them if we had. Much obliged for your individual offer all the same. Glad to hear you "like the *Freethinker* more as the years roll by." Also that you enjoyed Mimnermus's article on Gibbon. The handbills you refer to will be ready shortly.

Baynards.—It is difficult to advise you further. Sympathy is all we can extend now.

W. A. Jackson.—Mr. Foote received a card of invitation to the Democratic Convention on the morning of the day it was held. He had to leave London for Leicester in the afternoon.

C. F.—Our compliments to the family. See acknowledgments in list.

J. Ralston.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Watts delighted a good audience at Motherwell. Mr. Foote will be happy to lecture there when he next visits Glasgow.

W. H. Nash.—Your letter arrives as we are preparing to go to press. We hope to have time to deal with it in our next issue. Meanwhile, we may observe that your manners bespeak you a Christian.

E. R. Woodward.—*La Bible Amusante*, of which we have a copy, was dealt with many years ago in the *Freethinker*. We also reproduced some of its illustrations. Thanks all the same.

E. J. Voisey.—Thanks for your promised guinea to the Twentieth Century Fund. We shall be printing a full list again when Shilling Week (or Month) is cleared out of the way. Miss Vance is sending you the large photograph of Mr. Foote. He will be honored by your placing it "beside the late Charles Bradlaugh," as you say you intend.

A. J. H.—We are obliged for the reference, but we cannot deal with the matter further at present.

James Marsh.—Mr. Foote is quite well, thank you.

Two Clifton Admirers, subscribing to the Twentieth Century Fund Shilling Week, say: "We would like to take this opportunity of thanking you most sincerely for the great pleasure we experience each week when reading your most clever and fearless articles. It is difficult sometimes to express in words our deepest feelings, but we feel we should like you to know that amongst *all* your numerous readers there are none who appreciate your paper more heartily than we do." These correspondents remain anonymous, but their subscription is a "guarantee of good faith."

G. F. Finn (Mannington).—We hope we have your name rightly. If not, please advise us. See Shilling Week list for acknowledgment.

"A Scotch Friend," who promised £25 towards the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, sends it personally by Mr. Charles Watts.

J. G. Bartram.—The delay has been unavoidable. It is a question of adjusting dates. See paragraph.

S. Burgon.—Your repeated subscriptions, considering your means, ought to shame some male Freethinkers.

Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.—William J. Morley, 10s.; Horace W. Parsons, £10 10s.; Mrs. H. W. Parsons, 10s.

W. P. Adamson.—See paragraph.

G. Parsons.—We cannot possibly bear individual Lecture Notices in mind. When they are not inserted it may be taken that they have not been received. All go straight to the printers.

J. Gompertz.—You say we have "certainly worked well for the cause." We have worked hard, anyhow.

Horace W. Parsons, with his cheque for ten guineas, sends "best wishes for the success of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund." His wishes are evidently sincere. They are also practical. This might serve as a hint to other potential subscribers, and transform them into actual ones.

H. Dawson.—Thanks. See paragraph.

F. E. Willis.—Thanks for cuttings.

Received.—Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette—Glasgow Herald —Newcastle Evening Chronicle—Lyttleton Times—Walsall Observer—Wood Green Sentinel—Two Worlds—Liberator—Freidenker—Islamic World—Truthseeker—Blue Grass Blade.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

Lecture Notices must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Scale of Advertisements:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's lecture at Leicester on Sunday morning drew a very good audience for that part of the day. The subject was "China and the Christian Powers." Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, one of the strongest pillars of the Leicester Secular Society, took the chair and introduced the lecturer with a few words of warm welcome. To all appearance, Mr. Foote's address was highly appreciated. Before the time for the evening lecture on "Does Death End Us?" the rain fell heavily, and somewhat spoiled what promised to be a bumping audience. As it was, the body of the hall was full, but the gallery did not look as it usually does at Mr. Foote's Leicester meetings. In the adverse conditions, however, the gathering was flatteringly numerous. Mr. Wilder occupied the chair, and Mr. F. J. Gould was also seated on the platform, taking copious notes of the lecture. Outside it was wet and cheerless, but inside everything was bright and cheerful, and even enthusiastic. At the close of the proceedings Mr. Foote spoke briefly on the subject of Mr. Gould's candidature for a seat on the new School Board; and, judging from the vociferous applause, those present mean to give the "Secular Education" candidate their most vigorous and effective support.

Mr. Gould has received further letters of approval from the Rev. J. Page Hopps and Mr. J. Allanson Picton. The latter was once member of parliament for Leicester, and a very popular one too. His communication is therefore of special value. Amongst the subscribers to Mr. Gould's election fund is the Secular Society, Limited, which contributes three guineas.

Mr. Foote lectures at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham-court-road, London, this evening (Nov. 4), at 7.30. He will take for his subject "New Testament Superstitions." This lecture should be something of an eye-opener to the orthodox, and Freethinkers should try to bring their Christian friends along to the meeting.

Mr. Charles Watts's five lectures in Scotland last week were much appreciated by intelligent audiences, one of the main features of which was the presence of a goodly number of young men. The interest they took in the lectures was manifested by their asking several pertinent questions.

Mr. Watts had very fair audiences in Glasgow on Sunday. The Branch secretary also informs us that the evening lecture was highly appreciated, and that the friends were glad to see that the lecturer had returned to his usual good health. To-day (Sunday, November 4) Mr. Watts lectures three times in Liverpool.

Mr. Cohen had a pretty good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, in spite of the heavy rain. Of course it would have been much larger had the weather been propitious. It was a great pity that the wet evening should have fallen to the lot of Mr. Cohen, who lectures so seldom in that part of London.

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The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch has arranged to have four debates between Mr. Boyce, of the Christian Evidence Society, and some of its younger members, in the Westminster Hall, New Bridge-street. The first takes place this evening (November 4), when "Iconoclast" enters the lists on behalf of the Branch, and promises to "make things lively." The subject for debate is, "Does the Bible Harmonise with Modern Science?" An entertaining subject at this time of day!

The Camberwell branch holds its annual meeting to-day (Nov. 4), at 11 a.m. The attendance of all members is particularly requested.

Mr. J. W. Cox lectures for the West London Branch in Hyde Park to-day (Nov. 4) at 3 in the afternoon and 7 in the evening. Mr. Cox has been addressing large audiences from an independent platform, but we understand that he prefers now to lecture from the platform of the N.S.S. Branch.

The *Secular Almanack* for 1901 is on the stocks, and will be launched shortly. The Calendar has been overhauled, and other information brought up to date. Special articles are included by G. W. Foote, C. Watts, C. Cohen, A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, Chilperic, and others. This publication ought to be purchased by most Freethinkers. All profit realised by the sale accrues to the National Secular Society, and helps in carrying on Freethought propaganda. We expect to make a definite announcement in our next issue with regard to this publication.

Dr. W. Henry Menmuir asks us to announce the formation of an Edinburgh Rationalist Society, of which he is secretary *pro tem.* Its meetings are held at 14 Picardy-place on Sundays. The Society holds to the "supremacy of reason in human judgment," and aims at a "free platform for the discussion" of subjects affecting human welfare. The secretary's address is 47 Comely Bank-road, Edinburgh.

Mrs. Elder is presenting Govan with £50,000 for a public library. One condition of the gift is that the library shall be open on Sundays. A generous lady, and a sensible one too; though we daresay the local clergy are of a different opinion.

We regret that we did not receive a notice of Mr. G. J. Warren's candidature for a seat on the new Stepney Borough Council in time for a paragraph in last week's *Freethinker*. Mr. Warren was standing as one of the three "Progressive" candidates in the South-East Ward of Mile End. A long and appreciative article on his past services as a Vestryman appeared in the *East End News* of October 19. Mr. Warren is a vice-president of the National Secular Society, and his genial presence is always welcome at Executive meetings.

Once again we venture to ask our friends in various parts of the country to obtain and send us the addresses of newsagents who will display a weekly contents-sheet of the *Freethinker*. This is a sure method of promoting our circulation. The contents-sheet is always one to arrest attention and arouse curiosity.

Some friends who have sent us such newsagents' addresses write as though we had failed to forward the contents-sheet. We are much obliged to them for their kind attention, but the fault must lie elsewhere. Miss Vance carefully looks to this matter herself, and every wrapper is checked by the book of such addresses before posting. Perhaps the newsagents have failed to keep their promise. It would be well if friends would keep an eye upon them, and let us know the actual result, as we don't want to waste time, labor, printing, and postage stamps.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

SHILLING WEEK.

(Fifth List.)

To Tuesday, October 30.

C. H. Cattell, 1s.; R. C. N., 5s.; J. Carrington, 2s.; H. Barnett, 5s.; C. Quinton, 5s.; W. Elcoat, 5s.; T. Vine, 2s.; E. B., 2s. 4d.; C. and T. Heaton (second subscription), 5s.; Old Atheist, 2s. 6d.; G. Howlett, 1s.; C. D. M. and Friends, 3s.; E. Cole, 1s. 6d.; J. R., 2s.; W. W., 2s.; R. M., 1s.; Mrs. F., 1s.; Mr. F., 3s.; W. F., 1s.; H. F., 1s.; Mrs. McMillan, 5s.; Mr. Wright, 1s.; James Marsh, 2s.; H. Yonge, 1s.; H. Lyon, 1s.; M. Bywater, 1s.; Two Clifton Admirers, 10s.; G. F. Finn, £1; J. K., 2s.; S. Burgon, 2s. 6d.; Collection at Mr. C. Watts's Glasgow Lecture, 13s. 1d.; J. Kelser, 1s.; J. Hockin, 1s.; J. Gompertz, 2s.; A. Rowley, 3s.

What, then, do our Christian Friends Believe?

Last Sunday morning I sat patiently listening to the fervid eloquence of an earnest Methodist minister.

After a lengthy exposition of most undeniable orthodoxy, the reverend gentleman wound up with the customary final appeal, reminding us that Christ came into the world to save sinners, but that only those who accepted him could be saved. Did my clerical friend really believe his own doctrine, I wonder? If so, did he realise all the horror of his belief?

What proportion of the world's population is now, or ever has been, genuinely Christian?

Is it, indeed, a fact that the unconverted, dying daily, are dropping by their thousands into hell? If so, what a terrible satire to call Christianity "glad tidings." To the mass of mankind it brings simply tidings of damnation.

Surely no man believing the orthodox teaching can sit quietly in his pew, knowing the while that his fellows are crowding into hell.

The Christian, going in and out amongst us, should be "of all men most miserable," for he looks around upon vast masses of unconverted humanity. He knows that most men do not really understand Christianity at all; it does not practically touch their lives. This may or may not be their own fault; but there stands the fact—and over all this multitude hangs the doom of eternal torment. Does he believe this? I venture to think that he does not, or he would surely go mad with the realisation of its awful consequences. This belief, nevertheless, lies at the very root of Christ's teaching.

We are told that, through Adam's sin, we are all condemned to eternal death; but, through Christ's sacrifice, those who believe in him, *and they alone*, will be saved from this death.

Is not this a fair statement of the Christian position as preached in hundreds of pulpits every Sunday? "Blood and Fire" is very truly the motto of the Christianity of Christ.

But do our Christian friends believe in it? If not, what, then, do our Christian friends believe?

If a man may reach heaven without belief in Christ, the main object of Christianity—"conversion," or "second birth"—becomes quite superfluous. If a man must believe or trust in Christ in order to reach heaven, what becomes of the countless toiling millions who either know not or care not what lies beyond the grave?

Surely a man cannot force himself, either at the command of God or from an instinct of self-preservation, to believe or to love without very sufficient reason. One cannot conjure up heart-yearnings to order.

It seems evident that Christianity is based upon a dogma repugnant to every principle both of humanity and of common sense. By its tremendous and unreasonable demands upon us it exhibits its own inherent weakness.

A Young Freethinker.

The National Secular Society.

Report of monthly Executive Meeting, held at the Society's offices on Thursday, October 25; Mr. G. W. Foote in the chair. There were present also: Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, S. Hartmann, W. Leat, B. Munton, C. Quinton, T. Shore, H. Stace, T. Thurlow, and the Secretary.

Apologies for non-attendance were read from Messrs. Warren, Roger, Moss, and Neate. Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. The cash statement was received and adopted.

This meeting falling, as it did, in the middle of the Borough elections, in which so many absent members of the Council were interested, only routine business was transacted.

The President gave a report of the recent Demonstration at Birmingham, which had been a signal success.

The Annual Dinner was also reported as being arranged for Monday, January 14.

Other minor matters were dealt with, and the meeting adjourned. Edith M. Vance, *Secretary.*

N.B.—Branch Secretaries are reminded that particulars for the *Secular Almanack* cannot be inserted after November 5.

The Late Professor Shuttleworth.

The late Professor Shuttleworth, whose death occurred quite recently, was a High Churchman, a brave worker for social reform as he understood it, and an old friend of the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, whom he supported in the Church and Stage Guild days. As a Christian clergyman, his ways were far apart from ours. But he had at least one thing in common with us—a conviction that all faiths, including his own, were disgraced by resorting to persecution. He spoke in favor of the absolute repeal of the Blasphemy Laws at the great St. James's Hall demonstration shortly after our release from Holloway Prison in 1884. This was a courageous act, and we have always honored him for it. We feel that we ought to add this little tribute to his memory.

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Evidential Amenities.

A story told of a conversation between a Christian Evidence grinder and one of his deep-chested applauders admirably illustrates the rascality bred by religion and the indiscipline which is the bane of Freethought. The man of God was sallying forth as the substitute for a brother "infidel-slayer" who had been announced for an *al fresco* oration on "The Existence of Deity." The faithful henchman, in the innocence of his soul, ventured to assume that the subject advertised would be duly dealt with, but the vulpine follower of the Lamb of God opined otherwise. He was not going to discourse metaphysics, said he; he intended, rather, to worry the Freethinkers, and work their indignation up to boiling heat by emptying upon them the lava of his abuse. A sapient policy, indeed; one which, while it lays bare the nakedness of Christian evidences and the unashamedness of the itinerant vendors of the same, also evokes cyclones of undisciplined protest from the unwary enthusiasm of certain hyper-sensitive Secularists who resent being abused instead of edified. It is an old and familiar dodge; one of the traditional tricks of the Christian evidence trade. It will continue to be played off upon the unbounded gullibility of Christians and the superfluous indignation of Secularists so long as the ingenious retain their power over the ingenuous.

Controversially speaking, Christian evidences proper don't pay. Defenders of the faith, like Paley or Butler of old, or Dr. A. J. Harrison of to-day—men, that is to say, who make appeal solely to the intellectual and moral side of their sceptical readers or audiences—have ever been, and are, viewed askance by full-blooded religionists as so many pamperers with Infidelity or mealy-mouthed utterers of soft things. The weapon most suitable to the Christian evidence taste is not the kid glove of kindness, but the bludgeon of brutality, and the lecturer who most ingeniously scalps the Secularists, murders their reputations, befouls their women with his base insinuations, or smirches the honor of his antagonists, is precisely the man most honored and applauded by the yelping yahoos who gather round the forum of religious eloquence set up by the C. E. S.

To tell the sober but brutal truth, Secularists have themselves to blame very largely both for the yelping and the yahooing. They herd around the slanderer of their principles, instead of rallying under their own flag. The vomiting of pious abuse into the mouths of incautious Freethinkers who frequent Christian Evidence Society meetings has always been a settled policy with the outdoor advocate of the fine old religion of love. For more than a quarter of a century have I known the tribe of valiant slanderers who gird on the sword of the Lord and of Engström, and during that time the leopard has never once changed his spots. Theirs is a policy deliberately pursued; that policy being to trail the red herring of personality across the path of sober discussion, on the principle that, as there is no hell, we must make one, boiling hot and strong as death, for the naughty unbelievers. As a matter of fact, the chief reputations recently made on the Christian Evidence platform were bubble reputations blown into being by the perfervid indignation of Secularists, evoked by the extravagance of vituperation indulged in by the Christian advocates. When the torrent of abuse was intermittent or moderate, the counteracting wave of indignation was too weak to bear the slanderer high upon the shoulders of fame; but when the limits of human endurance had been carefully calculated, so as to evolve the requisite vigor of righteous indignation, then scoundrelism was glorified *in excelsis*, and perched on a throne of power and pay, erected and appointed by the hands that vainly sought to demolish, but actually builded instead.

Let our friends remember the advice of wily old Talleyrand: Above all things, not too much zeal. If we ask with the Psalmist, "Why do the Christians so furiously rage?" the clear answer is, Because they have lost their case, and can only now indulge in Billingsgate. If controversial Christians, instead of vindicating Moses, abuse Darwin; if, instead of whitewashing their God, they vilify the Secularist lecturer and call him a thief; if, instead of showing the reasonableness of their triple-headed God-theory, they prove that the lecturer's grandmother sold tripe and smoked a meerchaum—all these irrelevancies and puerilities, self-evidently, are but the muddle-headed attempts of charlatans to confuse the issue, to hide the true points of discussion from people's eyes, and to prolong the reign of superstition by stirring up passion and strife. Secularists can only expect to gather sour grapes from the evidential thorn. If they touch the apologetic pitch or approach its pious platform, they will only be defiled or reviled. They would be more prudent to let the gentle shepherds alone, and leave them to build up the massive wall of filth around the sheepfold of faith. We can afford to let them vent their fury and wrath in unfructuous words, and can enjoy the luxury of a smile as the evidential windbags explode with loud blasts of rage. The wholeheartedness with which the meek and lowly ones lay themselves out to vilify and annoy the men whom they dare not reason with on the plane of sound science, the wholesale shelving which for years past Christian Evidences proper have received at the hands of the C. E. S., in order to find room for personalities and puerilities, are signs clear as noonday that Christianity has dropped exhausted out of the arena of discussion, and is swaggering ingloriously in the gutter of mere hooliganism, along the path that leads inevitably to contempt and oblivion.

Wm. Heaford.

Death of Professor Max Müller.

There is no particular cause for lamentation at the death of Professor Max Müller. He had attained to a good old age, and had practically done all the work he had to do. He was a famous philologist and a learned Orientalist. He performed a valuable service in making English readers acquainted with the thought of Asia in general, and of India in particular. His editorship of the voluminous "Sacred Books of the East" was distinctly to his credit. Incidentally he drew attention to the fact that the Bible, in spite of its prominence in Western lands, is one of these Eastern collections of sacred literature. For our part, we were never able to rate his contributions to the discussion of religion and philosophy at a high value. He was really a pre-Darwinian. And that says all to the sufficiently educated and intelligent reader. His ideas were fixed before the evolutionary conception swept like a wave over the true mind of the civilised world. Nevertheless, he was a liberalising influence in his way. Some listened to him who would not have listened to a more advanced teacher. He set his face against miracles—Christian as well as non-Christian—as an integral part of religion. This was not historically or essentially accurate, but it doubtless fortified the mild heresy of many persons who still profess and call themselves Christians. On the whole, while he was not one of the leaders of modern thought, he did a useful work of its kind, and is entitled to our respectful consideration.

Sultan Solomon.

Solomon was the Jewish sultan. His Hebrew name, Shelômôh, is very stately, and means "The Peaceful." The Lord called him Jedidiah, which means "Beloved of Jah." According to Chronicles, he was the *fifth* son of David by the frail and beautiful Bathsheba, though the earlier account in Samuel makes him the second. The eldest died to wipe out the memorial of David's adultery. The three others were Shimea, Shoab, and Nathan, the last of whom became the ancestor of Christ according to Luke, though Matthew traces the Savior's descent through Solomon and Rehoboam.

Adonijah was the hereditary heir to David's throne after the death of Absalom. But Bathsheba, with the assistance of the prophet Nathan, took advantage of the old king's dotage to cheat Adonijah of the succession in favor of her own dearly beloved son. The pretty little comedy enacted by this pair of conspirators is narrated with charming *naïveté*. Bathsheba reminded David of his promise that Solomon should succeed him. While they were conversing, Nathan called accidentally on the very same business, and between them they extorted an oath in the young fellow's interest. Like a Cæsar under the Roman empire, Solomon was

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immediately invested with the purple. Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, anointed him with holy hair-oil, and seated upon David's best mule he received the popular acclamations of "Long live king Solomon." Poor Adonijah was "done brown," and even his life was in danger. Fearing Solomon, as a true chip of the old block, he fled to the sanctuary of the altar, and refused to leave it without an oath that his life should be spared.

Soon afterwards David died, and Solomon ascended the throne. His age, according to Josephus, was fourteen. Most modern writers, including Milman, say he was twenty. He reigned forty years, and at his death Rehoboam was forty-one, so that he must have married early as well as often.

David had left his successor a legacy of bloodshed, and Solomon was not the man to neglect such a duty, especially when it coincided with his interest. But before killing Joab and Shimei he tried his "prentice hand" on his brother Adonijah. This unfortunate fellow requested Bathsheba to plead that he might marry Abishag the Shunamite, the pretty damsel who had acted as David's bed-warmer. Now, in oriental countries the new king takes the old king's harem, and this infatuated request savored of pretension to the throne. Solomon appears to have regarded it in this light, though many critics have believed that he himself loved Abishag, and that his rage was a passion of jealousy. Be that as it may, Solomon ordered the immediate execution of Adonijah. This summary vengeance staggered even the orthodox mind of Adam Clarke. "I cannot help thinking," he says, "that the reign of Solomon began rather inauspiciously; even a brother's blood must be shed to cause him to sit securely on his throne."

Solomon's next victim was "Abiathar the priest," who had been guilty of consorting with Adonijah when he was heir presumptive to the throne. Abiathar had probably anointed David at Hebron, he had faithfully followed David while he was a hunted outlaw, he had been forty years David's priest and counsellor. But all his loyal services were forgotten. Solomon did not venture to take his life, but he "thrust him out" from his priesthood, and banished him to his private estate at Anathoth, with a significant warning that his life hung upon a thread. "I will not *at this time* put thee to death," said Solomon. It was a dreadful punishment, little short of death, and "it is probable that he did not long survive so terrible a disgrace."

Joab now saw what he might expect, for he also had favored Adonijah. Fleeing to the sanctuary of the Tabernacle, he "caught hold on the horns of the altar." Adam Clarke says that "the altars were so sacred among all the people that in general even the vilest wretch found safety if he once reached the altar." Solomon, however, commanded Benaiah, his new general and chief-executioner, to go and kill Joab. But Benaiah did not dare to violate the sanctity of the altar, so he invited Joab to "come forth." "Nay," said Joab, "but I will die here." Benaiah returned to Solomon, who laconically said, "Fall upon him and bury him." The order was obeyed, and Joab's white hairs were befouled with his own blood.

Dr. Farrar urges that the Mosaic law, which was unknown in Solomon's time, justified this bloodshed in the Tabernacle, and cites the text in Exodus (xxi. 14) which declares that a malicious murderer might be dragged from the very altar. But in what sense was Joab "a murderer"? He had killed Abner and Amasa many years before, and David had reaped the fruit of both those "crimes." Abner had slain Joab's brother. He killed him unwillingly, it is true; yet, according to the code of that age, Joab was bound to be his brother's *Goel* or "blood-avenger." Amasa was killed in an emergency. David had appointed him over Joab's head, although he was an Ishmaelite and had recently been a rebel. Dr. Farrar admits that this was "obvious injustice and feeble impolicy." Amasa dallied and proved his incompetence, and Joab was dispatched to suppress Sheba's rebellion, which he did with his usual promptitude, vigor, and success. He slew Amasa, but he saved David. Had he committed a murder, in the ordinary sense of the word, he should have been punished at the time. It was the grossest hypocrisy to treat him as a common murderer many years afterwards, when he was old, feeble, and friendless. Bishop Patrick had the honesty to allow that "Joab was not killed for the murder of Abner, but for the attempt to beg Abishag for Adonijah." Dr. Farrar calls it a "just retribution," but he evidently sees that unsophisticated human nature will regard it in another light, and therefore he begs us to judge Solomon "neither by our customs nor by our moral standards."

Joab had been the mainstay of David's throne; his valor and generalship had suppressed more than one dangerous rebellion, and he stood loyally by David in that darkest hour of adversity when he fled on foot from his capital to escape death from the hand of his own rebellious son. Surely the devotion which shone steadily in that supreme trial should have been his safeguard for ever; and if he had been guilty of indiscretions, the hand that signed the death-warrant of Uriah was not entitled to cast the first stone, nor was a son of Bathsheba entitled to cast the second. Joab had struck terror into the enemies of Israel, yet he perished like a common felon by the order of a king whose throne his valor had established. How justly might he have exclaimed, like Strafford, "Put not your trust in princes!"

Joab being disposed of, Solomon turned his attention to Shimei. This old man lived in Jerusalem, under penalty of death if he crossed "the brook Kedron." But two of his servants ran away to Gath, and he imprudently followed them, and brought them back. Perhaps, as he had not crossed the Kedron, he imagined that he had not disobeyed. "It is astonishing," as Adam Clarke remarks, "that, with his eyes wide open, he would thus run into the jaws of death." Solomon mercilessly stood by the strictest interpretation of his order, and poor old Shimei's hoar head, as David had enjoined, was "brought down to the grave with blood."

Milman calls Shimei "a dangerous character," but nothing could be more absurd. With the exception of a harmless descendant of Jonathan, Shimei was the sole representative of the ruined house of Saul, and Solomon took the first opportunity of putting him out of the way. No wonder Dr. Farrar again pleads that "we must not judge of Solomon's conduct by modern rules."

Solomon now felt secure, and reigned "in all his glory." The rest of his history is semi-fabulous. Dr. Farrar admits that the Books of Kings "were not composed as a whole till nearly five centuries after the earlier events which they record," and Dr. Robertson Smith refers to the "many floating and fragmentary notes of various dates" that have found a place in the account of Solomon's reign. His dominion is preposterously exaggerated. Even the building of Tadmor is ascribed to him. Gold was so plentiful that silver was "nothing accounted of." Judah and Israel ate, drank, and were merry, and were like "the sand which is by the sea in multitude." An impossible population of over nine millions is put into the Holy Land. Solomon had "forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots," a number which Chronicles reduces to four thousand. He was "wiser than all men," even than four gentlemen whose names were never heard of outside the Bible; and "all kings of the earth" sent messengers to his court. Yet the fame of this wonderful sultan would have been utterly lost if the Jews had not preserved it themselves.

The Queen of Sheba is the only one of Solomon's royal visitors whose name survives. Jesus Christ calls her "the queen of the south," which is delightfully vague. Josephus calls her the "queen of Egypt and Ethiopia." Whiston, his translator, corrects this romantic blunder, and says she was the queen of Sabæa, "a country near the sea in the south of Arabia Felix." The Arabs call her Balkis, and tell many legends of her visit to Solomon. Like the queen of the Amazons, who had a child by Alexander to keep up the breed, the queen of Sheba went away pregnant, and the kings of Abyssinia are supposed to have descended from her bantling. According to another story, Solomon was told she had hairy legs, and he resolved to satisfy himself on this point. Water was poured on a pavement of crystal, and Balkis, thinking it was deep, lifted her petticoats high enough to disprove the libel.

Scripture says she "came to prove him with hard questions." The Septuagint says "with enigmas." Playing at conundrums was a common pastime. Josephus tells us that Solomon and Hiram, the king of Tyre, exchanged "riddles," and paid forfeits to each other when they failed to solve them. Solomon had no failures with Balkis. He "told her all her questions." He found the cat, told her how many beans made five, said where Moses was when the light went out, and made a most miraculous display of wisdom. Balkis said his sagacity exceeded his fame, and presented him with nearly a million pounds in cash, besides spices and precious stones. Solving riddles was a paying business in those days.

Solomon's glory grew still more wonderful. Josephus gives him a mounted retinue of young men, the flower of the nation, clad in Tyrian purple, with long hair sprinkled with gold dust which sparkled in the sun. Scripture says his ships traded to Tarshish, and brought back gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. His throne was of ivory inlaid with gold. Two lions in effigy stood beside him, and twelve others on the six steps of the throne. Tradition says that none but Solomon could sit on this structure, and when Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and tried to ascend it, those carved lions broke his legs. Probably this is as true as the rest of the story.

"So king Solomon," says Scripture, "exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom." Canon Rawlinson echoes this nonsense, and regards the kingdom of Solomon as "one of the great Oriental Empires on a par with Chaldæa and Assyria." Archdeacon Farrar, however, protests against such exaggeration.

—*From "Bible Heroes," by* G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

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The Religion of the Future.

The world is full of unrest; the old ideals have lost their influence, and from all quarters comes the cry for a new religion. And a new religion is prophesied and promised.

Attempts are even now being made to formulate modern ideas into systems which each of the several founders endeavors to hope may develop into the "Religion of the Future."

A discussion of these various schemes is not here in place; for the present subject the only point of interest is the fact of the already widespread and rapidly-increasing conviction that Christianity has had its day, and that its sun is setting, to rise no more, forever. There are many who would fain turn back the shadow upon this dial of the world's progress. Even with the evidence plain before their eyes of the impotency of the religion of the Cross, they prognosticate the reign of anarchy as soon as the restraints of religion are removed. But the shadow cannot be turned back, and the (as yet) comparatively small number of individuals who have freed themselves entirely from spiritual tyranny, and are living (in Christian parlance) "without God and without hope in the world," are in reality among the most useful members of society, and are by no means the unhappiest of their species.

Why should they be unhappy if their intentions are honest and their time is usefully spent? They are alive, and it is good to be alive. As for a prospect after death, they know that nothing which has once existed is annihilated; it must endure in some form forever—and so they trust themselves to Nature, which placed them here without their knowledge or desire, and will continue its work in conformity with laws which they did not make and cannot alter.

The entire helplessness of man in view of death is his best preservative against fear.

In the meantime there is enough to do. The evils which superstition has brought upon the race must be counteracted and removed; this world, until now so full of the habitations of cruelty, must become a happy home for all mankind alike; knowledge, untrammelled by prejudice, must be increased and spread abroad; universal peace must guarantee universal progress, and unselfish love must be the ground-tone of the prevailing harmony.

This end has never been, and never can be, attained by means of religion, but it is possible of attainment through the cultivation, by natural processes, of the best natural impulses.

All the poets have dreamed of perfected humanity; all philosophers and sages and reformers have uttered wise maxims for the conduct of life; but superstition has always added thereto the rewards and punishments of eternity, so that the hopes and fears thus excited have chilled and blighted the labors and the fruits of time.

Every sentient being must desire immortality; every one of us hopes for endless reunion with kindred spirits beloved on earth, for opportunity to correct mistakes, to explain misunderstandings, to finish interrupted work, to acquire unlimited knowledge, to solve perplexing mysteries—in a word, to love and learn and enjoy forever and ever.

Whether all this is to be our privilege we do not, and cannot, know; only this is certain, that our help is needed in this world at present, while, as regards the future, good work here is the best preparation for complete fruition hereafter.

So long as human beings live and suffer and enjoy in this, the only world open to our present knowledge, the Brotherhood of Man will be the highest possible ideal, and the effort to realise that ideal will be the noblest and most satisfactory occupation of every individual intelligence. The end can be attained only by learning and obeying the eternal laws of nature, as these are demonstrated through the discoveries of science.

—Elizabeth E. Evans, "*The Christ Myth.*"

It seems to me not only possible, but probable, that in a higher, and, above all, a happier condition of human life, not annihilation, but immortality, may be the burdensome idea; and that human nature, though pleased with the present, and by no means impatient to quit it, would find comfort, and not sadness, in the thought that it is not chained through eternity to a conscious existence, which it cannot be assured that it will always wish to preserve.—*J. S. Mill.*

By damning a soul—that is to say, by turning it away for ever from his presence, or, in less mysterious words, by shutting it out for ever from the truth—God would turn himself away from his soul, would limit his own power, and would, so to say, damn himself also to a certain extent. The pain of damnation recoils on him who inflicts it. Instead of damning those who have gone wrong, God should everlastingly call them back to him.—*Guyau.*

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Infancy is the perpetual Messiah, which comes into the arms of fallen men, and pleads with them to return to Paradise.—*Emerson.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[*Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.*]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "New Testament Superstitions."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11, Annual Members' Meeting; 7, Conversazione.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, A lecture.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road: 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "Christ and Capitalism."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 3.30, J. W. Cox; 7.15, W. J. Cox.

COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): Councillor Bowman, "Demos and his Needs."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): For particulars see Saturday's *Birmingham Daily Mail*.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Revenge."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): C. Cohen—11.30, "A Chapter in the History of Freethought"; 2.30, "Man: Whence and Whither?" 6.30, "Foreign Missions: What they do, and how they do it."

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Mr. Leviticus, "Is There a God in Existence?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, J. McCabe, "The Problem of the Jew."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): Charles Watts—11, "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?"; 3, "The Defeat of the Cross"; 7, "A Secularist's Challenge to the Clergy."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. Percy Ward—11, "A Christian Ghost Story"; 3, "Religion in Board Schools"; 6.30, "The Delusion of Spiritualism." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Stanley Jones—3, "Law and Civilisation"; 7, "Christianity's Relation to Buddhism." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "Party Politics."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—November 4, Glasgow. 11, Aberdeen.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—November 4, Manchester. 18, Birmingham. 25, Sheffield. 25 and 27, Debate at Sheffield. December 9, Glasgow.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 45. SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Morals of the Primitive Christians.

VERY few minds can resist the effect of reiteration. You have only got to state a thing with sufficient energy often enough, and somebody is certain to believe it. There is, of course, a great deal that we have to take on trust, because we have not the power, or the time, or the inclination, to investigate every single opinion that is presented to us. Consequently, every now and again we have a rude awakening, and we find that something we had received in perfect good faith is really without a particle of evidence to support it. There are certain statements continually being met with among controversial theologians that are so frequently put forward with such complete assurance that very few think of questioning them; and thus they are received as acknowledged facts even by well-educated people. For instance, we are perpetually hearing about the high moral character of the early Christians, and the beautiful pattern they set to their heathen neighbors; and there has thus grown up a widespread notion that these early Christians really were very good, and the other inhabitants of the Roman Empire incorrigibly bad. But, in the first place, the more we know about the heathen world, the more we are compelled to recognise that the majority of the people who lived in it were quite as right-feeling and as right-living as the majority of the people who exist now. There were bad public men then, as there are now; and the despots of that period were often just as wicked as Christian despots have been. But when we come to some record which gives a picture of the life, aspirations, and manners of ordinary men, such as we have, for instance, in the celebrated Letters of Seneca, it is clear that the mass of mankind in those times went through life with the same integrity, blamelessness, honor, and rectitude that we expect to find in a respectable community of the present day. It may be argued that some of the Greek and Latin imaginative literature is of so improper a character that it is necessary to reserve it for the education of the aristocracy; but it must also be remembered that we likewise have, from the same period, the far more important philosophical works of such teachers as Plato and Aristotle, who organised the study of ethics and laid the foundation of European moral ideas. In fact, the ancient world is grossly and systematically libelled for the mere purpose of making it the foil for the alleged Christian virtues.

Where, however, shall we find any evidence of these virtues? All the information we possess about the primitive Christians is contained in the books of the New Testament; and, therefore, the moral conduct of the primitive Church must be judged from those documents. The Gospels, of course, relate exclusively to Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples; primitive Christianity commencing with the Acts of the Apostles. It is evident, however, that Acts gives us no ground for ascribing extraordinary virtues to the early converts. Only one quality of theirs is noticed, and that is their almsgiving. We are left quite in the dark as to their other peculiarities. We must, therefore, turn to the Epistles of St. Paul. Paul is very fond of vituperating the Gentiles—that is to say, the ordinary population of the Mediterranean countries—and he is never tired of asserting that every heathen man is a thief, and every heathen woman a harlot. It is, therefore, interesting to observe what he has to tell us about his own converts. The picture he draws is not at all inviting. Instead of the united, happy, loving Christian fraternities familiar to modern fiction, we read of "envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults"; and Paul is continually referring to the slanders directed against himself by his co-religionists. But there are other more serious charges. It is needless to say that the believing brethren were unblushing liars. That fact is patent to everyone who considers the mass of forged apocryphal literature which emanated from them. Paul himself was perpetually afraid that epistles might be fabricated in his name, and was careful to authenticate those he sent out. "The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle, so I write" (2 Thess. iii. 17; see also the conclusions to 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Colossians). He exhorts his converts to abandon their notorious habits of falsehood. "Lie not one to another," he says, in Col. iii. 9. "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor," he writes in Eph. iv. 25. But it is to be feared that the personal example of the apostle was not a good one. Truthfulness has always been a secondary matter to professors of religion; and Paul himself says: "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged a sinner?"

We learn, further, that the sexual morality of the primitive Christians was not of a high character. This is hardly to be wondered at. The thoughts and language of their teachers are continually running on such subjects; and it is well known that the mind is the principal exciting cause in such matters. Many close observers have pointed out that religious excitement is invariably accompanied by sexual excitement. The improprieties of the early Reformers were the constant theme of Catholic denunciation. The Anabaptists went to even greater lengths. And in the present century we have had the Shakers, Free-lovers, and other minor sects, whose weaknesses have lain in the same direction. In the early days of Methodism lapses from the paths of virtue were numerous; and the rise of the Salvation Army was signalised by similar phenomena, not to mention the frequent later cases in the newspapers. The fifth and sixth chapters of 1 Corinthians should be closely studied in estimating the moral characteristics of the primitive Christians. Paul specifically indicates that one of the Corinthian brethren was openly living with his father's wife, a thing "as is not so much as named among the Gentiles." The apostle's indignation is increased by the fact that this scandal was regarded with the utmost complacency by the other converts. He finds it necessary to warn the congregation to have nothing to do with any brother that is "a fornicator, or covetous, or a drunkard, or an extortioner"; thus fully admitting that recognised members of the Christian community indulged in all these vices. St. Paul goes on to complain that the converts brought vexatious suits against one another in the law courts. He tells them that they ought to suffer wrong and fraud at one another's hands, rather than go to law with one another. "Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." It is, therefore, not surprising to learn from Eph. iv. 28 that some of the virtuous primitive Christians were professional robbers, to whom it was necessary for the Apostle to say: "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor."

Paul also finds serious fault with the way in which the Corinthian converts conducted their *agapæ*. It appears that in these feasts everyone brought his own victuals and wine, and ate and drank them himself; so

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that the poorer members went away hungry, and the better-provided went away drunk. The apostle justly reproves the gluttonous brethren "whose God is their belly" (Phil. iii. 20), and says: "Let all be done in decency and order" (1 Cor. xiv. 40).

The directions given to Timothy for the choosing of bishops and deacons (1 Tim. iii. 1–12) are also significant. The bishop should be a man "not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre." The deacon is allowed to tipple a little more; but he must be "grave, not double-tongued, not given to *much* wine, not greedy of filthy lucre." The obvious inference, of course, is that the majority of the primitive brethren were wine-bibbing, deceitful, and avaricious persons, whom the Apostle did not care to see entrusted with office.

So far we have only referred to the brethren. The sisters of the community, when not addicted to vicious courses, seem to have been a vain, empty-headed lot. The apostle has to warn them to attire themselves in sober apparel, "not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" (1 Tim. ii. 9). When they were married, their husbands were supposed to keep them in order; but Paul complains that the young widows "learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. v. 13).

Consequently the great and shining virtues of the primitive Christians exist only in the religious imagination. They are conspicuous by their absence in the Epistles of St. Paul, where the moral character of the early converts is shown up in the most glaring fashion; and we can only suppose that those who proclaim the virtue of the primitive Church have never taken the trouble to study the evidence for themselves.

CHILPERIC.

Who is the Rogue?

WITH SOMETHING ABOUT TACITUS.

A FEW weeks ago I had occasion to refer a correspondent to my *brochure* entitled *The Sign of the Cross*, which is "a candid criticism," and a very careful one too, of Mr. Wilson Barrett's well-known play. In that little work I dealt at considerable length with the question of the famous "Christ" passage in the *Annals* of Tacitus, about which my correspondent seemed to be interested. I was soon favored with a reply to the effect that my correspondent had read my *brochure*, and did not think much of it. He remarked incidentally that it contained error, anachronism, and falsification. But he did not indicate these things, and I invited him to do so, as I make no pretension to infallibility, and am always ready to learn. At the same time I warned him against losing his temper—a failing to which controversialists, and particularly Christian controversialists, are unfortunately too liable. Well, my invitation has been accepted. This correspondent sends me another letter for insertion in the *Freethinker*. My readers will presently have an opportunity of perusing it. I wish to say, first, that it is written as if to tempt the recipient to throw it into the waste-basket; and, secondly, that it affects the old familiar air of suspicion of the fairness of Freethought editors. In this case, however, these orthodox virtues are both wasted. Had I been annoyed—which I am not, for this correspondent hardly reaches to the level of my disdain—I should still have inserted his letter, for he has fallen into the trap I laid for him in that bland invitation; as a Cromwellian Puritan would say, the Lord hath delivered him into my hands; and I have no objection whatever to my readers seeing him in that position.

And now for my correspondent's letter. Here it is exactly as he wrote it—grammar, graces, and all:—

74 Victoria-road,
West Kilburn, N.W.
Oct. 29, 1900.

SIR,—I note reference to my letter in answers to correspondents. As to "loss of temper," there seems to be a lack of discrimination in so attributing my strictures. Acquirement of knowledge by intuition, and its denial does not necessarily erase it from the pages of moral philosophy or metaphysics. I *am* like yourself (and without the uncertainty, or softening influence of "apparently") willing to learn. One could not possibly forget, having perused but a few of your (general term) publications, that "assertion is not proof." But to this proof:—

Two falsifications.

Falsification 1.—Where in Lardner's works shall I find his "admission" that "learned men were not agreed that this Suetonius passage related to Christ" (p. 39 your pamphlet).

Falsification 2.—Where in Lardner's works shall I find "that this Suetonius passage related to CHRIST."

P.S.—If my memory serves are these not in the "Diegesis," that infamous production of Taylor's.

Anachronism.—You make it appear by your remarks on Paul's visit to Rome that it was *subsequent* to the persecution. What proof have you that this was the case. (See pp. 37-38—end and top of p.)

Error 1.—"The Annals of Tacitus was first printed..... 1468-1470" (p. 39). You will here do good service if you can show how this can be, when as a fact the Annals (not a PART of them) first saw the light as a *completed* work in *1515* (the ed. of Beroaldus) not 1468 or 1470.

Error 2.—"Poggio forged them." Then kindly inform me as to his connection with the Codex Mediceus Prior *discovered* by *Arcimboldus*.

In conclusion I trust you will insert, if you insert it at all, the *whole* of this in your paper, not in scraps, in ansrs. "To Correspondents," and thus let your readers judge between us. They I take it, are also open to learn. Excuse my supplementing error 1 by 2.

I am, Sir, yrs,
W. H. NASH.

I proceed at once to deal with the two "falsifications." This is an ugly word, by the way; it involves deliberate fraud. When we hear that a man has *falsified* his accounts, we expect soon to hear that he is on the treadmill. My correspondent does not seem to appreciate the gravity of the expression. Instead of trying to prove me guilty of falsification, he puts me a question as if I were in the witness-box, whereas the assumption is that I am standing in the dock. You cannot charge a man with a crime, and then appeal to him for evidence of his guilt. My correspondent has no right to interrogate me at all. Instead of asking me where Lardner says what I assert, he should have denied that Lardner says anything of the kind. Then, if I could not produce the passage, I should be a convicted falsifier. However, as my correspondent does not understand his own duty, and as he is fishing for information, I will oblige him with what will serve the present turn. If he will go to the British Museum, or to some Public Library which contains a copy of the Kippis edition of Lardner in ten volumes (1829), and open the first volume, he will find what he seeks. It is at the end of the eleventh Chapter of the first Book, at the top of page 260. "It is disputed by learned men," are Lardner's words, "whether, by Chrestus, Suetonius means Jesus Christ." So much for "falsification" number one.

"Falsification" number two reads like a joke; and a rather disreputable joke too, for the words placed within quotation marks do not occur in my pamphlet, and are a sheer invention of my correspondent's. I never said that Lardner affirmed the Suetonius passage as relating to Christ. It did not lie in my way to do so. I am therefore under no obligation to prove what I never asserted, or even hinted. Still, I am willing to oblige my correspondent in his search for useful information. If he turns to the sixth volume of Lardner's works, he will find on page 642, under the head of "Testimonies of Ancient Heathens," that the Suetonius passage *is* treated as referring to Christ. Suetonius wrote that Claudius "banished the Jews from Rome, who were continually making disturbances, Chrestus being their leader." This is Lardner's rendering. And he comments upon it as follows:—

> Some learned men are not satisfied that this relates to the Christians; but it is well known that our Savior was sometimes called Chrestus by heathen people. And it is not impossible that the Jewish enmity against those of their own country, or others who had embraced Christianity, might produce some disputes and disturbances which came to the Emperor's knowledge. This seems to be the meaning of Suetonius, that 'there were disturbances among the Jews and others at Rome, upon occasion of Christ and his followers.'"

So much for "falsification" number two. It is twin

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brother to "falsification" number one. My correspondent accused me of flat roguery. Instead of trying to prove it, he took to asking questions. Well, I have answered them; and I have proved that he himself is either a rogue or a jackass. His impudent reference to Taylor's *Diegesis* is a suggestion that I had not read Lardner at first hand. But it is *he* who has not read Lardner. I begin to think he is some conceited Christian Evidence talker, who has collected a lot of second-hand scraps of learning, and thinks these sufficient to justify his standing forth as a perfect pundit.

Now for the "anachronism." I clear it away with one sweep of my pen. I do not know whether Paul visited Rome—"visits" is good, seeing that he went there a *prisoner*—before or after the alleged holocaust of the Christians by Nero. And nobody else knows either. Orthodox chronology, here as elsewhere, is purely arbitrary. But the precise date of Paul's "visit" to Rome makes no difference whatever to my argument. Mr. Barrett had put forward as history the statement that Nero gave liberty of worship to all his subjects but the Christians; and I pointed out, in reply, that when Paul went to Rome in custody he was allowed to preach Christianity every day under the very nose of his janitor—according to the statement of the primitive Christians themselves in the Acts of the Apostles.

And now for the "errors." I will take number two first, to get it out of the way. I did not assert, in my pamphlet, that Poggio forged the *Annals* of Tacitus. What I said was that Mr. W. R. Ross (a brother of the famous astronomer) had written a learned book to prove that position. "I do not desire," I said, "to take a side in this controversy. I do not know that I am entitled to." What I did question was "the authenticity of the particular passage which relates the persecution of the Christians by Nero." My argument on that point had no reference whatever to Poggio. If the *Annals* was forged by him, there is no need of argument at all, for the "Christ" passage falls, in that case, with the rest of the work. It is no part of my duty, therefore, to "inform" anyone as to Poggio's "connection" with the MS. of the first six books of the *Annals* that were "discovered" by Angelo Arcomboldi—for I suppose that is what my correspondent is rather circuitously referring to. It is enough to say that Mr. Ross's theory of Poggio's forgery of a manuscript "discovered" long after his death will be found in the fourth book of *Tacitus and Bracciolini*.

"Error" number one, which I take last, is founded upon the statement in my *brochure* that "The *Annals* of Tacitus was first printed at Venice between 1468 and 1470." This is true of the last six books of the *Annals*, and as these included the passage I was dealing with, and were also "discovered" by Poggio, I did not think it necessary, or even advisable, to open up another question which was far beyond the scope of my argument. Had I adopted Mr. Ross's theory I should have been obliged to discuss that question too. But I did not adopt it. Nor did I reject it. I merely mentioned it, and then passed on to my own argument, in which it was not involved.

Let me now ask my correspondent what he means by saying that the *Annals* of Tacitus "first saw the light as a *completed* work in 1515." Has he ever read the *Annals* himself? Is he second-hand here also? As a matter of fact, the *Annals* is (or *are*, if you please) not a *completed* work even now. The fifth book is incomplete; the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth books are missing; so is the conclusion of the sixteenth book; and there are slight interruptions in the text as it stands. On the whole, then, I incline to the belief that my correspondent has no first-hand knowledge of this subject. In that case, he was very foolish to challenge a writer in my position. No doubt I have many faults, and I have been accused of many more; but there is one of which I was never guilty. I never scamped a bit of work, I never made a second-hand reference, I never quoted from a book I had not read, and I never wrote on any subject without taking the trouble to obtain ample information upon it. Those who want to detect my weakness must look in other directions.

But let me not end with a personal note. Suppose my critic had made out any of his points, or even all of them, he would still have only found needles without seeing the haystack. What Lardner, or any other man, says is merely incidental. Questions have to be decided on the facts; unless we prefer the truth of authority to the authority of truth. Nor does it make the slightest difference to the authenticity or otherwise of the "Christ" passage in the *Annals* of Tacitus, whether the books as we have them were first published in the fifteenth or the sixteenth century. The ground of controversy lies behind the earliest possible date. It was that ground which I traversed in my argument in the *Sign of the Cross;* and it is upon that ground that I should be answered, and if possible confuted. But I am sorry to say it is the general practice of orthodox disputants to seize upon all points but the essential one. A notable instance of this weakness or dishonesty may be found in Bishop Lightfoot's labored reply to the author of *Supernatural Religion*. *My* critic belongs to much smaller fry, but in his little way he exhibits the very same characteristics. G. W. Foote.

Secular Progress at Home and Abroad.

The following familiar, but expressive, words from the pen of Thomas Paine will bear repeating here: "The world is my country, mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion." These words indicate the true spirit of altruism and the real principle of the brotherhood of man. They represent the philosophy of Secularism and the policy of Freethought propaganda. With Freethinkers humanity is higher than nationality, and to them the welfare of mankind is of more importance than the distinction of races. If the term "religion" is accepted at all, it should be understood to mean something very different from that which the Churches teach under that name. In the language of Dr. Kalisch, the religion of the future "must renounce uncertain traditions, imaginary narratives, and lifeless ceremonies; but it must, on the other hand, foster the purest and highest virtues of the human heart, and must lead to an active life of devotion, love, self-control, and cheerful sacrifice.....Henceforth, therefore, we do not desire a religion of fear, which is the fruit of delusion, but of love, which flows from intelligence; not a religion of vigor, which breeds servitude, but of joy, which bears witness of the freedom of the mind and heart; not a religion of contention, which persecutes others by the haughty presumption of infallibility, but of peace, which respects all honest convictions if they can but show works of charity and unselfish devotions." To such a religion as is here described Secularists can have no objection, for it was this "binding" principle that Paine proclaimed in the memorable words quoted above.

It must be exceedingly gratifying to all true friends of Freethought to see the rapid advancement that has recently been made in the Secular movement both at home and abroad. It is frequently asked by superficial observers, Where are the visible results of Freethought advocacy? My answer is, in the general decline of theological dominancy, and the practical acceptance of Secular views throughout the civilised world. The Church, once the supreme dictator of popular opinion, has now to adapt itself to the secular requirements of the age, to abandon many of its former strongholds, and to make mundane affairs its primary consideration. In this country the clergy dare not attempt to defend in public debate religious views which a few decades ago were thought to be invulnerable. The only semblance of oral defence of Christianity is now, with few exceptions, left to ignorant and vulgar exponents, who know no more of the real nature of the faith they disgrace than they do of its history. They have no regard either for the logic of facts or the courtesy of controversy. While this evident decline in Christian propaganda has been steadily going on, Secular forces have been consolidated, and Freethought advocacy has been greatly extended.

The establishment by Mr. Foote of the Secular Society, Limited, and the Twentieth Century Fund has enabled work to be done that previously was impossible to accomplish. Such Freethought demonstrations as the one which recently took place in the Town Hall at Birmingham is a new departure in our propaganda, and cannot but have a useful result in disseminating

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a knowledge of our principles. It is decided to have other demonstrations, both in the English provinces and in Scotland, so far as the funds of the Society will permit. Mr. Cohen and myself have been engaged by the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, and by the Executive of the N. S. S., for a six months' mission in all parts of the country. Our duty will be to expound Secular principles in districts where hitherto, through the want of means, little has been heard of them.

It is more than ever important to observe discretion in our advocacy. While, no doubt, it will be necessary to continue to blend the destructive and constructive in our platform work, the scientific and general educational requirements of modern life must not be lost sight of. Personally, I prefer expatiating upon the practical teachings of Secularism rather than upon the speculations associated with Atheism. Not, be it observed, that I object to the term Atheist, for it correctly represents the attitude of my mind towards what is called the "God question." Moreover, I thoroughly endorse the words of Mr. George Jacob Holyoake when he said that Atheism is a "wholesome term. It is a defiant militant word. There is a ring of decision about it. There is no cringing in it. It keeps no terms with superstition. It makes war, and means it. It carries you away from the noisome word-jugglery of the conventional pulpits, and brings you face to face with nature." Such is Mr. Holyoake's defence of the use of the word Atheism, as given in the very book which he recently stated that he desires to be judged by after his death—which, it is to be hoped, is still a long way off.

Still, Atheist as I am, it appears to me there are not now the same reasons for dealing with the various beliefs in God as obtained in former days. If he exist, only a few persons trouble to any serious extent about him. The supernatural has become practically a silent member. My desire, therefore, is to deal with issues that affect our daily lives, and, above all, to show the necessity for Secularism, and its superiority over any of the supernatural religions of the world. We want to demonstrate to our opponents that, after a fair trial, theology has failed to regenerate mankind; that there are thousands of sincere searchers for truth who cannot believe the teachings of Christianity; that it is a service to man for him to receive new truths as they are revealed by the light of science and general knowledge; that the rising generation should be protected from the snares of priestcraft, and be taught the advantages of self-reliance and obedience to the laws of nature; that woman should be placed in a position wherein she could vindicate her own rights and dignity; that to live a moral life is the highest duty of us all; and, finally, that reason, aided by experience, is the best known guide in the formation of character. To inculcate the truths here indicated is the mission of the Secular advocate; and it is encouraging to know that the progress which is being made in this direction is beyond all doubt.

But it is not only at home where this advancement is seen; it is also apparent abroad. Mr. William Heaford, in his recent report in these columns of the Paris Freethought Congress, gave particulars of the testimony of the delegates who had assembled from all parts of France and Belgium, as to the spread of Freethought in their respective districts. We have also gathered in the American Freethought papers, as well as from private sources, of the extensive preparations now being made for the Congress which is to assemble in Cincinnati at the latter part of the present month. Of course, the Freethinkers of Great Britain wish the Congress all possible success, and many of us would like to be present at the gathering. Personally, it would afford me much pleasure to once more visit my American friends, but I find that at the present time it is impossible. Some few months since Mr. and Mrs. Levi, who probably are the most active workers in the Secular movement in Cincinnati, were in this country, and I enjoyed much of their very agreeable society. While referring to America, perhaps I may be excused for stating that during their stay with us they gave me a pressing invitation to attend their Congress. That was entirely unofficial, and, of course, nothing decisive was arrived at, although I assured them that I should be delighted to be with them. Soon after I read a notice in the American papers, written by Dr. Wilson, that I was coming, which, to say the least, was premature, as I had given no authority for such a positive announcement. The first *official* invitation I received was a few weeks since from Mr. Levi and the Secretary of the American Union. The latter invited me to attend the Congress "as its guest, and deliver one or more addresses." To this I at once replied that, to my regret, I found it impossible to leave England this year. The matter is of no importance, except that I do not wish either my friend Mr. Levi or myself to be placed in a false position. I still hope to see the American friends again ere I "depart to be no more seen."

CHARLES WATTS.

The Clergy on Citizenship.

GIVEN a God of infinite wisdom, power, and love, creating and governing a world such as ours, what is the obvious conclusion concerning its condition to which one is driven? Clearly that the world is as he would have it to be. To decide otherwise is to question some of the characteristics with which he is credited. His wisdom foresaw, his power devised, his love permitted, all that has been, is, or will be. All the complex and manifold workings of natural forces must have formed part of the primal plan: he was free to create or abstain from creating; and, having endowed his deity with the above-named attributes, the Theist is logically driven to assent to the above-drawn conclusion.

What, then, should be the correct attitude of the sincere believer striving to guide his life by his beliefs? Clearly to let the world alone, to submit to every injustice, bear patiently with all wrong, as being part of the ordained constitution of things, and trust to God to put them in a more comfortable condition in the future. It is nothing short of presumptuous for believers in deity to be constantly questioning his wisdom by suggestions as to how things might be better managed, to throw doubt upon his power by offering to lend a hand, or to indicate a suspicion of his fatherly love by providing for the needy and the unfortunate. Their attitude should be a passive one—but, needless to say, it is not; and it is exceedingly curious to watch the conflict between common sense and religious beliefs that goes on in the mind of the ordinary believer. However much he may *hope* to be a denizen of another world, he *is* a resident in this; and in the long run, and in the majority of cases, this life will secure the first place in his considerations. The result is that, while he may be loudly proclaiming the providence of God, he is often busily engaged in establishing a providence of man; and, while deprecating "mere human efforts," will treat as a religious visionary the one who trusts God far enough to leave the salvation of the world entirely in his hands.

Citizen Sunday—the day set apart by many of the London clergy for addresses dealing with the civic life of the Metropolis—gave us numerous examples of this happily illogical frame of mind, in the shape of sermons dealing with the Borough Council Elections. Much of the advice given was good enough in its way—that is, as good as advice can be that is intended to please all and hurt none. It is so simple to say that London ought to be clean and healthy and sober; that the housing question is a serious problem; or that fresh air, good food, and decent elbow-room are essential to the breeding of healthy, intelligent citizens. These are, after all, the mere commonplaces of pulpit, press, and platform, and, while suitable enough as decoration for an address, carry one a wonderfully little way in the search for causes or methods of cure.

Many of the clergy complained, as was only to be expected, of the apathy of people concerning the municipal life of their own city. People rush into extravagant enthusiasm over events that are occurring 7,000 miles off, but are strangely obtuse concerning the wrongs and injustices at their own doors—forgetting, as Lord Rosebery put it, that London as well as South Africa is a portion of the British Empire. The complaint is only too well grounded; but with whom does the responsibility for this condition of things

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lie? It would be unfair to fix all the blame on the different Churches; but it is quite clear that they are responsible for a large part of the mental indifference and sluggishness that prevail. A system of religion cannot control the world to the extent that Christianity has controlled it, and for so lengthy a period, without incurring some responsibility for existing conditions. And when is further borne in mind the enormous power wielded by the Christian clergy during a large part of their reign, their responsibility for existing evils becomes still more manifest. When a clergyman's wife reminded Ruskin that the clergy were the only friends the poor had, his reply was that no more deadly charge could be brought against them than that; and he asked, reasonably enough, if they had "so smoothed their words and so sold their authority that, after twelve hundred years' entrusting of the Gospel to them, there is no man in England who will have mercy on the poor but they." The conclusion is unavoidable that, had but a tenth part of the energy that they have expended in cultivating a belief in supernaturalism been spent in inculcating a stern sense of social duty, we might long ere now have banished such injustices and miseries as are a blot on our civilisation and a threat to the future of the race.

The truth is that Christianity has been historically, and in its periods of power, inimical to sane social development. The attitude of the early Christians towards the social life of the Roman Empire is unmistakable. To them no man could be at the same time a staunch follower of Christ and a partaker in the civil administration of the Empire. They were in the world, but not of it. A list of the names of Christian leaders for some centuries shows us men who either withdrew absolutely from social and political life, or entered into it only for the purpose of introducing theological questions, ready to support any party and policy that made for the advancement of their religious opinions. The result was that theological disputes gradually replaced discussions of social aims and methods; the recluse, destitute of home ties and social obligations, acknowledging no country, and spurning even a home, became the ideal character placed before the people. The municipal spirit of old Rome sank lower and lower with each fresh encroachment of Christianity. Local senates disappeared, popular election was forgotten, political liberty died out, and the sense of social effort for social ends had to be re-created by after ages, in spite of the bitter opposition of the different religious organizations. A people are, after all, what their heredity and institutions make them; and the systematic policy of holding up before a people the future life as being of infinitely greater importance than this, the wasting of energy on religious services that cannot in their very nature instruct him as to the essential conditions of social well-being, the opposition shown to general scientific development, and the close alliance of the clergy with all orders of vested interests, have all co-operated to blunt feelings that should have been sedulously and carefully cultivated.

But the gem of the collection of addresses I have been reading is supplied by the Rev. Dr. Horton. He not only dwelt upon the evils existent in London, but he attempted, on religious grounds, to supply a reason for them. This is always a somewhat dangerous policy, and it is specially so in the hands of a man who, like Dr. Horton, seems much more at home in falling foul of Roman Catholics for calling Mary the Mother of God—which he himself must believe if he believes in the divinity of Jesus—than in any subject requiring careful and thoughtful handling. He set himself to answer the questions, "Why was the world permitted to contain so much injustice? Why were the weak thrust to the wall? Why were the houseless allowed to accumulate in the great city?" These are questions often asked—questions to which there are many replies, but no answers. That is, there are no answers that square with the preliminary Theistic hypothesis. The Theist cannot admit that pain is in itself an evil—a doctrine that Mr. Gladstone, in his book on Bishop Butler, described as "false, fearfully prevalent, and most dangerous," since that would be casting on his deity the blame for whatever evil exists; and so he is compelled to discover good in evil simply and solely because his Theistic belief demands that it shall be so.

Dr. Horton accordingly repeats the old answer to such questions, that all this suffering and injustice is permitted for our good. Injustice is permitted "in order to produce in men that highest of divine attributes—a heart of compassion." People were homeless "that there might be formed in [others] a great redemptive compassion.....it might be said that the suffering of London was permitted in order to develop the heart of pity." Now, here is a good, kind, cheerful doctrine to preach to people who are half-starved and homeless! They are suffering in order that others may have created a great "redemptive compassion" to help them. It is like a provincial employer who recently said that compelling his employees to work longer hours was equal to an advance in wages, since they did not have so much leisure time to spend the money they were getting. Might not the poor raise a reasonable protest against being tortured in order that a few others might be made pitiful and sympathetic? Might it not also be suggested that a little common sense and a full measure of justice would be far more effective than ever "a heart of pity" or a "redemptive compassion" is likely to be? It requires a religious preacher to suggest that over half a million people have been condemned by God to live under conditions that ruin them body and mind, and are robbed by the greed of capital and the lust of power, that over 50,000 little children are attending London's schools insufficiently fed, and all in order that *other* people may be made better by their suffering. If there is such a crime as blasphemy, it is surely here; if there is an opinion that outrages human reason and common decency, it is this.

A very little knowledge of psychology might have taught Dr. Horton better. Not only would it have taught him that the normal effect of suffering on the individual is depression, but also that the comtemplation of it under normal conditions of life, instead of creating sympathy, destroys it. For suffering to do its work effectually in this direction, it must be the exception, not the rule. Even a fairly attentive reading of history might have shown the preacher that the ages that have exhibited least pity and least sympathy are those in which the suffering and injustice have been greatest.

Look at the matter for a moment from another point of view. Suffering is here in order to develop the natures of those who witness it. Then why seek to destroy it? If suffering and injustice are the conditions for the growth of sympathy, is it not likely that in destroying these conditions you will destroy that "highest Divine attribute—a heart of compassion," and leave human nature cold, pitiless, and unsympathetic? Logically, Dr. Horton should say to the new Borough Councils: "Whatever you do, do not seek to redress injustice or abolish misery. God has 'permitted' it for our benefit, to purify our natures, and raise us to the inestimable heights of moral fellowship with the Hampstead Congregational Church. Let us not take away from our descendants the conditions of their improvement, but retain suffering in our midst, if only for their benefit, much as the ancient Spartans are said to have made their slaves drunk for the education of their children."

Dr. Horton's theory presents the slum landlord and the sweater in quite a new light. These, it seems, are ornaments to society rather than a disgrace. They are the agents of God, in fact, sweating their employees and rack-renting their tenants for the moral improvement of the race, and as part of the divine plan of human government. It is terrible to think of what we might have been had God not "permitted" their presence also. Really, when we are erecting monuments to the nation's benefactors some room ought to be made for effigies of these much-maligned gentlemen, and their apologue might fitly be written by Dr. Horton.

In sober truth, I do not believe that any man has any faith in such apologies for suffering—not even Dr. Horton. I do not believe that any man can look round at the suffering and injustice in our midst, and then say with perfect honesty that it is good, or has been good, that the God he believes in should have allowed it. He may say it with his lips, but his actions give the lie to his words. For the very man who puts forward the plea will usually be found doing something to remove the suffering he is apologising for. Human

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nature is fortunately superior to all theories of deity. That, at least, cannot for long see hundreds of thousands of people suffering, justly or unjustly, without doing something, however little, to remedy their lot.

C. COHEN.

Acid Drops.

THE Christian Allies, having killed a hundred Chinese for every murdered European, are still only at the beginning of their task of "vengeance." They have set up a Court of their own, and are trying Chinamen for acts alleged to have been committed in their own territory—which is against every rule of international law we ever heard of. This Court has passed sentence of death on "the officials of Paoting-fu convicted of responsibility for the murder of Europeans." And, in order to reconcile public opinion in England to this extraordinary procedure, the *Times* Pekin correspondent says that "the evidence against these officials showed that one poor American lady, before being executed, was led naked through the city with her breasts cut off." Now, we know that all Asiatics are apt to be cruel, though hardly more so than American lynchers of negroes. But does any man in his right senses believe this extravagant story? Is it possible that a woman could undergo such a terrible surgical operation as having both her breasts amputated, and walk about immediately afterwards? According to this story, she was "led" through the city in this condition. This implies that she moved on her own feet, and we are bound to say that we do not believe a word of it. We venture to say that the "poor American lady" would in all probability have died on the spot if she had been mutilated in that fashion. The subsequent "execution" would have been not only unnecessary, but impossible.

How beautifully the Christian Powers are giving the Heathen Chinese their much-needed lesson in the higher principles of civilisation! A flood of light is thrown upon the process by the following letter, written by a German soldier, and translated by the Berlin correspondent of the *Daily News*: "To-day we had to hasten to the assistance of German sailors. We made sixteen Chinese prisoners, tied them together by their pigtails, and took them with us in this state. Some brutal fellows rained blows on them most pitilessly, so that the blood flowed out of their bodies. It was awful. I was just standing on guard before the prisoners, but took no part in it, for I should not like to be responsible for such brutality. After dinner they were all condemned to be shot. I was commandeered to carry out the sentence. When they were marching to the place of execution, two of them ran away. Eight quite young Chinese were allowed to live; the other eight were shot. We had to take up our position from twelve to fifteen feet away from them, four of us before one Chinese. At the command 'Ready,' there was a regular whine for mercy. Then came 'Fire!' and each Chinaman was pierced by four bullets. They fell backwards into the grave which they themselves had had to dig beforehand. Thus ended the eight Chinese, and I shall never forget this Sunday, the 26th August, in Pekin."

But there is worse than this to be recorded. One of the besieged party in the British Legation at Peking was the Rev. Arthur H. Smith, author of *Chinese Characteristics* and *Village Life in China*. This gentleman contributes to the New York *Outlook* a graphic account of the "retribution" inflicted upon the Chinese capital by the Allied Powers. And, as he holds that the Celestials are being justly punished, we may take his narrative to be accurate enough, especially when it tells against his own side. Well, this gentleman gives a lively account of the looting that went on. It seems that, although they are not at war with China, the Allied troops stole everything they could lay hands on, and committed much wanton destruction. That was bad enough, and mean enough too; but after the loot comes something far more sickening. Here are the Rev. A. H. Smith's own words: "Day after day long lines of mules may be seen loaded with the loot of silk-shops, cloth-shops, grain-shops, with anything and everything. The British policy is the most scientific; under it everything is turned into a common stock and sold for the benefit of the occupying army. The Russian plan is that of the Middle Ages, slightly modified by a veneer of Christianity, and is accompanied by the violation of women on a scale which leads to the suicide of hundreds of Chinese, till the wells are choked. The savagery of some of the Russian troops is simply barbaric; but there is no nation which can throw stones at another in this dreadful matter."

We hope this does not mean that British soldiers have been guilty of outraging Chinese women. If they have, we can only express our horror and detestation, and dissociate ourselves as far as we can from the infamy. About the Russian soldiers, in any case, Mr. Smith is quite explicit. They violated so many Chinese women that hundreds of Chinese men committed suicide to escape the memory of what had been inflicted upon their sisters, daughters, and wives. Just think of it! Imagine your own wife, daughter, or sister at the mercy of these beasts. And then recollect that Chinamen love their womenkind, and are sensitive about their honor, just as much as any Europeans.

These legions of the Holy Czar, these soldiers of Christ, who are there to avenge the death of some Christian missionaries, together with that of a comparative handful of other professed disciples of Jesus, are supposed to be demonstrating to the Chinese the superior morality of the Christian faith. And, in order to demonstrate this, they kill and steal wholesale, destroy historic and sacred things with absolute wantonness, and then proceed to rape hundreds—perhaps thousands—of innocent, inoffensive Chinese women. After this, we suppose, the conversion of China to Christianity will be a very easy matter. Such "evidences" of Christianity must be overwhelmingly persuasive.

What has Emperor William to say about this raping business? Are we to conclude from his silence—seeing how talkative he is—that the Chinese are to be treated to the bitter end as the Jews treated their defeated enemies? Is it to be unlimited bloodshed, unlimited spoil, and "to every man a damsel or two"?

Stephen Choppen, who hung himself the other day at Hadleigh, was a retired blacksmith, who used to forge the celebrated "witch bottles" for the wizard Murrell. These bottles contained blood, water, finger nails, hair, and pins. They were screwed up airtight and used as "charms" against witches. When heated they would usually burst, and this was thought to indicate that the witch's diabolical influence was destroyed. A nice bit of reading about England in the nineteenth century! Especially for an educated Chinaman, who hears so much over here about the superstition of his ignorant countrymen.

At one of the largest girls' schools in the South of England (we read) it was proposed that Mr. Leonard Merrick's last novel, *The Worldlings*, should be added to the library, but the proposal was defeated on account of the "impurity" of the title. Angels and ministers of grace defend us! What next? But we dare say the girls in that school are expected to read the Bible. There is no impurity in the title of that volume, but there is enough in its contents to sicken a dustman. We suppose this is what Jesus Christ meant by straining at gnats and swallowing camels.

Miss Marie Corelli declares, in *The Master Christian*, that most men hate superior women—like herself, we suppose; and that when a woman does any great thing in the world the men conspire to run her down, and rob her of the credit of her performance. This is very great nonsense, of course, and hardly worth a serious answer. We merely refer to it in connection with Sir Theodore Martin's proposal to have a bust of his late wife, a famous Shakespearean actress, placed in the Stratford-on-Avon Parish Church. That proposal has been defeated by Miss Marie Corelli, who raised a hue and cry against it, declaring that the bust of Lady Martin was going to be placed too near Shakespeare's, and that its presence there would be a perfect profanation. Perhaps it would be, though we don't quite know; for Shakespeare admired clever and beautiful women, and Helen Faucit was both. But how strange it is that Miss Marie Corelli, of all her sex, should be the one to raise this terrible outcry against another woman. Perhaps the place sought for Helen Faucit's bust ought to be reserved for Marie Corelli's. Not that this would have been Shakespeare's choice. As a poet, and as a man, he had a better taste. Were he alive again to-day he would not spend a minute over any book of Marie Corelli's. But how he would be delighted to see a great and beautiful actress impersonating one of his noblest female characters! He never had the opportunity of seeing this at his own theatre, for the female parts in that age were all played by boys.

Mr. Reader Harris, Q.C., and a leader of the Pentecostal League, has often stated that he was once "a confirmed Agnostic." We should be sorry, of course, to give him the lie on such a point. But we have never met with anyone who knew him while he was in that lost condition. However, he now tells an interviewer of the *Sunday School Chronicle* that he "saw a good deal of Mr. Bradlaugh, Mrs. Besant, and a large number of those who were connected with the Agnostic movement." Very likely he thinks so, but he is mistaken. Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant were never connected with any Agnostic movement. Mr. Bradlaugh, in particular, expressly repudiated the designation "Agnostic," and called himself an Atheist to the last conscious day of his life.

"I would like," Mr. Reader Harris says, "to bear my testimony to the splendid outward moral lives of many of those men whom I knew in those days. While I thank God

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that the light has since come into my life, I nevertheless must confess that I learnt much from my early association and activity with some of those who have been cruelly maligned by the 'religious press,' those whom it would have been worth while their trying to understand."

This is, at any rate, a great improvement on the tone and attitude of the common "converted Freethinker," who spends most of his time in explaining what a filthy wicked lot he sojourned amongst until the Lord called him out of the darkness of Egypt to the light of the Promised Land. What these libellous fools never answer is this pertinent question :—How on earth were they attracted by a party consisting of liars, rogues, drunkards, profligates, and harlots?

This testimony of Mr. Reader Harris's is good enough on the face of it. Still, we hardly know what value can be attached to anything he says. He seems to have such a fine, romantic memory. Speaking the other day at Truro, according to the *West Briton*, he said that he once attended a great meeting presided over by Charles Bradlaugh, to hear an Agnostic lecturer; and during a pause in the proceedings an old lady in the audience moved a vote of confidence in Jesus Christ, which was seconded by another old lady, and carried. We daresay this is as true as Gospel. But it certainly is not a bit truer. We feel tempted to say that Mr. Reader Harris is the third old lady in the story. If he has the slightest regard for his own reputation, he will state when and where that meeting was held, and give the name of some newspaper in which the incident was reported. Anything of the kind, if it happened, would have been eagerly seized upon by the press in the locality. We do not suppose, however, that Mr. Harris cares enough for his own reputation, or for the truth either, to furnish the evidence which seems necessary. Perhaps the most charitable explanation is that "the pause in the proceedings," during which the two old ladies got their resolution through, was a subjective one. Mr. Reader Harris may have fallen asleep and dreamed the whole of that pious interlude.

Mr. Reader Harris also said that he could pick Atheists out of a mixed company by the shape of their heads. No doubt he would look at their bump of wonder. A small bump, or none at all, would indicate an Atheist; a moderate bump a Unitarian; a fair-sized bump a Churchman; a large bump a Nonconformist; and an extra big bump a disciple of Mr. Reader Harris.

"We can never," says the *Methodist Times*, "forget the awful significance of the fact that John Stuart Mill spoke of the sublimest passages of St. John as unintelligible jargon, and that Renan called the Epistle to the Ephesians *une épître banale*—a commonplace epistle." Poor *Methodist Times*, which cannot forget the awful significance. After all, the point is whether St. John *did* write unintelligible jargon, and whether St. Paul *did* pen a commonplace epistle. Both compositions are accessible for investigation, and it may turn out that the *Methodist Times* has simply been alarmed at the truth.

Whilst singing, "to the praise and glory of God," one of the psalms at the morning service in Wellington (Salop) Parish Church, John Breeze, county-court bailiff, fell dead in his pew.

Mr. Frank Bullen tells, says the *British Weekly*, how, on one of the South Sea Islands, he saw a missionary seated in a comfortable arm-chair smoking a cigar and reading a novel by Ouida, while on the table beside him stood a tumbler full of brandy and water! There is no reason to suppose that Mr. Bullen is yarning, though he is now writing for the *B. W.* a Christian serial, "With Christ at Sea."

Ian Maclaren has been sermonising on "Straightness." "Abraham," he says, "was the father of the faithful, and a noble type of religion; but Abraham lied to Pharaoh, just with that kind of lie which finds its shelter beneath the shadow of religion. He played upon words, saying that Sarah was his sister, which, in a sense, she was, but allowing Pharaoh to understand that she was not his wife, which, of course, she was. It was not a downright falsehood, but a guarded and calculated departure from the truth—a policy in which the religious conscience has shown itself an adept."

"There is a kind of man," Dr. Watson continues, "who will not drink, nor swear, who believes in the deity of Christ and the eternal punishment of the wicked, but who has no more idea of personal honor than a fox, and will do things at which a high-class man of the world would be aghast. We are inclined sometimes to think that, if a man be religious, he must be straightforward; and, if he be straightforward, he must be religious. But we have leaped too hastily to a conclusion, for there are people with a genuine sense of religion who are as crooked as a corkscrew, and there are people who would never dream of calling themselves religious, but yet they are as straight as a die. As, for instance, Jacob in the one class, and in the other such a man as the Duke of Wellington among Englishmen, and Abraham Lincoln among Americans."

Perhaps the Lord never considered the possibility of earthquakes when he created the world. Or he may have thought them of trifling importance. All the same, a recent earthquake in Caracas, Venezuela, has caused twenty-five deaths. The President of Venezuela broke his leg by jumping from a second-floor window. The Lord might inquire into the matter and see what can be done.

Gradually the truth leaks out. Now we learn from a Christian account of *The Chinaman at Home*, published by a well-known Christian firm of publishers—Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton—some facts which have not hitherto been widely published. The Chinaman, with his positive worship of literary style, is, we learn, simply repelled by current translations of the Bible, which are absolutely without style, and, according to his notions, without sense. The author of *The Chinaman at Home* considers it a most misguided policy to identify Christianity with Western civilisation, the latter being regarded as pure barbarism.

The personal wealth of Pope Leo XIII. is estimated to exceed £4,000,000—a pretty considerable sum for a follower of Jesus Christ, who preached poverty, and enjoined his disciples to sell all and give to the poor. The official expenses of the Pope are all provided for; but the most extraordinary presents are made to him, either by will or during the life of the donors.

The following is a list of presents made to Leo XIII. since his accession :—Twenty-six tiaras ornamented with precious stones; 319 gold crosses set with brilliants and other stones; 1,200 cups in gold or silver; 81 rings, one of which, from the Sultan, is worth 100,000 francs; the largest diamond in the world, presented by the President of the Transvaal; 16 pastorals in gold and precious stones; 884 gold or silver stands for the Host; 7 gold or silver statues, about 1,000 objects of art, besides any quantity of money.

The "regular"—that is, the monastic—clergy in France have been piling up immense wealth during the past ten years, and they are using it against the life of the Republic. It is known that they own £40,000,000 worth of property, besides an incalculable amount which is held surreptitiously in evasion of the law. Is it any wonder, then, that the Government recognises the necessity of pulling down this power within the State? It is all very well for Englishmen to condemn such action in the name of "religious liberty." But the fact is, we had to deal with a similar danger hundreds of years ago, and when *mortmain* Acts proved inadequate we resorted to wholesale confiscation.

Another sidelight has been thrown on Roman Catholicism in France by the letter of the Bishop of Laval to the *Matin*, which shows the inherent incompatibility of the Church with the Republic. The prelate, a staunch Republican, says he will be master in his own diocese, and will have no "foreign" priests to dictate to him. The "foreign" ecclesiastic in question is Père Hamelin, member of a religious congregation founded in another diocese. The priest is rector of a college which is a hot-bed of Royalism. It is said the Bishop has placed the college under an interdict; if so, he has been guilty of an excess of authority which Rome will put right. Of one thing, however, we may be sure—the Government of Republican Defence will defend its episcopal champion to the end, and it is very probable that this Laval scandal will lead to considerable friction between France and the Holy See.

Professor Mackintosh is another preacher of the Gospel who says he has been *mis*reported. He takes the *British Weekly* to task on some report of something which he was supposed to have said; but the *B. W.* doesn't seem inclined to put up with his bluff. Professor Mackintosh says: "I never said that the belief in miracles had been killed. I have always held and taught the opposite. What I said in my paper was that modern science makes such belief harder than it was to the indolent faith of a century ago, and that modern criticism may treat some miracle narratives as legendary." After all, is it of really vital importance what Professor Mackintosh said about miracles?

"The oldest comic paper in Australia," we learn, "is now edited by a Sunday-school teacher." So we had supposed. We read it (professionally) every week. Let us add, to prevent misconception, that "the oldest, etc.," is not the *Sydney Bulletin*. The *Bulletin* is a serious paper—as serious as the *Pink 'Un*; and Mr. Archibald is not a Sunday-school teacher—not regularly.—*Topical Times*.

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The Rev. A. E. Barnes-Lawrence seems to be one of those Gospel-persons who, in the most contradictory kind of way, are always complaining about the stage, and yet are always hanging about it. He moved, at the Rochester Diocesan Conference: "That the moral condition of the modern stage urgently calls for the notice and action of Christian people." He said that the attitude of Christians in regard to the stage had completely changed since the days of the primitive Church. To-day thousands of professedly Christian people attended the theatre, clergymen were to be found night after night at the play, an English Bishop had written the introduction to a stage manager's dramatic novel, and actors and actresses were advertised as giving an entertainment on behalf of a Church society. The *Times*, in a recent leader, pointed out that they had had upon the stage a great deal too much of the woman with a past, and too many of her, and that the leading doctrine of the new woman school was that the thing worth living for and working for was the free discussion of unsavoury subjects by men and women. Mr. Beerbohm Tree had written to the *Times* apologetically, to the effect that it was not the business of the drama to preach. If that Conference were to do nothing more than to pledge itself to a policy of abstention from the theatre until things mended, it would be one of the longest steps ever taken by the Church for the reform of the stage.

Suppose the whole Rochester Diocesan Conference stayed away from the theatre, how would that reform the stage? Besides, there is a shrewd suspicion that it is not so much the stage as the Church which needs reforming.

The following is an extract from a sermon on the Atonement, preached by the chaplain in Christ Church, Bankipore: "This doctrine of Atonement by blood, as formulated in the Latin Church, was a return to the latest and most corrupt form of the old paganism. 'It was the bloody sacrificial rites of the East which belong to the latest phase of paganism; it was the ghastly performance of the Taurobolim which shaped the Christian belief. The worshipper stood in a pit below a perforated platform, and was drenched from head to foot in the shower-bath of the blood that gushed from the slaughtered bull above.' This horrible ritual was held to be a ransom from all guilt and a pledge of blessedness both in this world and the world to come. As the worshipper, reeking and dripping with this sanguine torrent, passed out through the crowd, others pressed about him, to win some share by a touch or stain in the magic potency of that atoning rite."

Many of our well-known hymns are responsible for keeping alive this horrible and sanguinary view of the Atonement. So Christians sing in harmony with this old Pagan rite:—

> There is a fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
> And sinners plunged beneath that flood
> Lose all their guilty stains.

An irreverent workman caused no end of trouble for the congregation of, and the contractor who built, the New Trinity Methodist Church at Third and Guthrie-streets, Louisville, Kentucky. In the south-west corner of the new edifice, back of the pulpit, is the pipe organ. Over the organ is an arch and a dome. In this dome is frescoed an open Bible. This work was done some weeks ago with great care and trouble. Across the face of the Bible were frescoed, according to directions, the words: "Pax Vobiscum." But when the congregation inspected the new church, or surveyed from their pews the organ and the dome above, they noticed under "Pax Vobiscum" another inscription. One member provided himself with a pair of glasses and turned them on the inscription. To his horror he read: "This was done in a hell of a rush." This inscription was right across the face of the Bible.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Rev. W. Harold Davies, Baptist minister, of Swansea, has left his church and joined the Unitarians. He says that he could have stopped in his church, and gone on preaching liberal sermons, like some of his ministerial brethren, who believe pretty much as he does; but he did not think it honest to pursue such a course, and he determined to stand out in the open on the ground of his own actual belief. This is honorable, of course, and we tender the reverend gentleman our best respects. At the same time, we venture to suggest that his present talk about God and Christ is as superstitious in its way as the other doctrines he has discarded. Perhaps he will go farther in the future.

"Give to everyone that asketh," said Jesus Christ. But his followers don't do business in that way. The vicar and wardens of Kirk Michael, Isle of Man, for instance, advertise that they have £250 to lend on "good security." We suppose they also want good interest. When they find a suitable borrower, the vicar ought to preach a special sermon on "What would Jesus Do?"

There is a rumpus at Sydney. Lord Beauchamp, the Governor, was present in his official robes at the dedication of a Roman Catholic Cathedral. Bishop Wellington, who preached the sermon, left out a strong anti-Protestant passage, which the Governor might have resented by walking out of the place. But he published the sermon afterwards with the omitted passage restored, and the Protestants have been holding indignation meetings against poor Lord Beauchamp. We hope it will be a lesson to him for the future. Ecclesiastics are prone to such little dodges, and the best policy of responsible statesmen is to keep clear of them altogether.

Professor Rhees, in his *Life of Jesus of Nazareth*, deals in this way with the story of the Temptation: "It is not idle curiosity which inquires whence the evangelists got the story of the temptation of Jesus. Even if the whole transaction took place on the plane of outer-sensuous life, and Jesus was bodily carried to Jerusalem and to the mountain top, there is no probability that any witnesses were at hand who could tell the tale. But the fact that, in any case, the vision of the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time (Luke iv. 5) could have been spiritually only, since no mountain, however high (Matt. iv. 8), could give, physically, that wide sweep of view, suggests that the whole account tells in pictorial language an intensely real, inner experience of Jesus."

At the Stranraer Sheriff Court, last week, the State Church minister of Portpatrick pleaded "Guilty" to a charge of assaulting the son of the Free Church minister, and was fined £1, with the option of seven days' imprisonment. It was stated that the son of the accused and the complainer had quarrelled the previous day, and the son of the Auld Kirk got the worst of the argument. Accused, who afterwards expressed regret for his action, met his son's victor in a railway carriage and thrashed him with a stick.

The latest word of wisdom from the Law Courts is, says the *Topical Times*, Mr. Sprague's explanation that the *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette* and the *Christian World* are not one and the same paper. In saying this we are sure that Mr. Sprague was merely anticipating a judicial question as to whether they were in any way identified. We often mistake the one for the other ourselves.

A clandestine distillery has been discovered in the Catholic seminary at Le Mans. An inspector disguised himself as a cooper, and asked at the seminary if they had any casks for sale. He was taken into the cellar and allowed to examine the premises. Half an hour later he returned with a police officer, and the still, which he had found hidden in the cellar, was confiscated. The still is believed to have been placed in the cellar without the knowledge of the superior of the seminary.

According to a current story about the Bishop of London, he was once listening to a long-winded, prosy speech, and, turning to a fellow-sufferer, he asked: "Do you know that speaker?" "No," was the answer. "I do," said the Bishop; "he speaks under many aliases, but his name is Thomas Rot."

We hope this story is true. It enables us to think more kindly of the Bishop of London. It shows he is, after all, a human being. The most urbane and fastidious man is sometimes tempted to exclaim "Rot!" And we think none the worse of him for the exclamation. Normal speech is unequal to certain occasions. Nothing but good, hot, vigorous slang will then serve the turn.

Questioning.

> Oh, solve me Life's riddle, I pray ye,
> The torturing ancient enigma,
> O'er which full many a brain had long puzzled.
> Old heads in hieroglyph-marked mitres,
> Heads in turbans and caps medieval,
> Wig-covered pates, and a thousand others,
> Sweating, wearying heads of mortals,
> Tell me what signifies *Man?*
> Whence came he hither? Where goes he hence?
> Who dwells there on high in the radiant planets?
> The billows are murmuring their murmur unceasing,
> Wild blows the wind, the dark clouds are fleeting,
> The stars are still gleaming, so calmly and cold,
> And a fool awaits an answer.
>
> —*Heinrich Heine.*

The claims of morality to our allegiance, so far as its precepts are solidly established, rest on the same positive base as our faith in the truth of physical laws.—*John Morley.*

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 11, Secular Hall, 61 New Church-road, Camberwell; 7.30, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ."

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—November 11, Athenæum Hall.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

T. DUNBAR.—Pleased to hear that your newsagent in the Lillie-road, Fulham, displays our weekly contents-sheet "with good results." This is one of the best ways of promoting our circulation. Accept our thanks.

G. J. WARREN.—Very pleased to receive your manly letter. The N. S. S. Executive knows that you are busy with public duties, and will always reckon you as "present in the spirit" when you cannot attend in the flesh. Come now and then, as you are able.

W. COX.—A paragraph was already in type, otherwise yours would have been inserted. We are glad to hear that Mr. Watts had such good meetings at Liverpool on Sunday, but sorry to hear that you were again prevented from charging for admission. Will the police never mind their own business?

F. COCKS.—No doubt something could be done at Walthamstow. We will keep the matter in mind. Will you try to ascertain what halls are available for lectures?

F. W. L.—The subject is one that arouses so much hot feeling that we prefer to "let it slide." Thanks all the same.

F. E. WILLIS.—Sorry, but not surprised, to hear that the Birmingham papers are boycotting Mr. Ward's candidature.

J. SAID.—Under consideration.

R. LEWIS.—We have no authority to state whether Sir Robert Ball is a Freethinker or not. You must judge for yourself, as we do. We fancy he is a good way off orthodoxy.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Really no thanks are needed. Mr. Foote was happy to be able to speak on behalf of Mr. Ward's candidature. Glad to see you are all working hard for his success.

P. B. B.—Schopenhauer's essay on the Freedom of the Will has not, to our knowledge, been translated into English. There is a good (and cheap) French translation, if that would assist you.

J. WOODS.—We have little interest in the Christian family quarrel between Mr. George Wise and the Liverpool Ritualists.

AN OCTOGENARIAN FREETHINKER, who subscribes £2 2s. to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, has been a Freethinker for sixty-five years, is as loyal to the cause as ever, and takes unabated interest in it. He read Mr. Holyoake's *Reasoner* and Charles Bradlaugh's *National Reformer*, and now reads the *Freethinker*. "I admire," he says, "not only its editorial articles, but also the valuable contributions of C. Watts, C. Cohen, and others, whose excellent writings aid in making the *Freethinker* the lucid and progressive journal it is."

A. G. BARKER.—Neither do we forget Frank Hugh O'Donnell's disgusting behavior to Charles Bradlaugh when the giant was fighting for his seat in the House of Commons. We have no belief whatever in the man, and can only conclude that he has some end to serve by his present action. Sorry we cannot oblige you with the "B. V." pamphlets you are seeking.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—J. Attley, £1; An Octogenarian Freethinker of sixty-five years' standing, £2 2s.; The Turnbull Family (Glasgow), 13s. 6d.

SHILLING WEEK.—Mr. Cayford, 3s.; We Three, 10s.; T. H., 1s.; T. J., 2s.; J. Davis, 1s.; H. Gage, 2s.; J. O. Restall, 1s.; F. Cocks, 2s. Correction.—T. Vine, 2s. (last week), should have been 2s. 6d.

A. J. HOOPER wishes to say he is very pleased with the photographic work done by Mr. George Cross, whose advertisement will be found in our business pages.

YOUNG FREETHINKER.—Received and under consideration.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your serviceable cuttings.

A. G. LYE.—We answered your letter by post, as the case seemed urgent. It is not illegal to charge for seats at Sunday lectures. Mr. Justice Collins's judgment—the latest on the question—was to the effect that *some* free seats, however few, were a sufficient compliance with the old Act of George III. This should be pressed upon the attention of the lessees and proprietors of halls when they have any misgivings. For our own part, we have always believed that we could defeat a prosecution if there were *no* free seats. We defied the police at Hull and at Portsmouth, and in each case they backed down. But we have never thought it politic to disclose what would be our plan of campaign, for the game is not one to be played with the cards upon the table.

RECEIVED.—Secular Thought—Liberator—Two Worlds—Truthseeker (New York)—Freidenker—Ethical World—Nottingham Express—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Isle of Man Times—Blue Grass Blade—Edinburgh Evening News—Birmingham Gazette—Cambria Daily News—Torch of Reason—West Briton—Lucifer—Public Opinion—Boston Investigator.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

THERE was a crowded audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening in spite of the wet, disagreeable weather. Mr. Foote lectured on "New Testament Superstitions," and the subject lent itself naturally to a good deal of comical treatment, although the serious element was not overlooked. Few audiences could ever have put more laughter into an hour's sitting; and sometimes the lecturer himself was visibly tempted to join in the hilarity, but he kept a straight face by an effort of self-restraint. A few questions were asked at the close, but no one accepted the chairman's invitation of discussion. The gentleman who boasted at Hyde Park in an earlier part of the day that he was going to "smash" Mr. Foote found discretion the better part of his valor, and did not put in an appearance.

Mr. Foote lectures this evening (Nov. 11) at the Secular Hall, Camberwell. His subject will be "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ." As he (G. W. F., not J. C.) has not lectured at Camberwell for some time, and the subject is an attractive one, there will doubtless be a large audience on this occasion.

Mr. Charles Watts had three capital audiences last Sunday at Liverpool. Friends came from surrounding districts, and also from Manchester and Chester. Mr. Watts was in his best form, and roused the meetings to a high pitch of enthusiasm. Mr. Hamwood presided morning and afternoon, and Mr. Small in the evening. Mr. Watts lectures at the Athenæum Hall this evening (Nov. 11), taking for his subject "The Death of Jehovah."

"Where are the Christians?" is the heading of a long descriptive report in the Birmingham *Weekly Mercury* of Mr. Foote's lecture in the Town Hall on "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ." Evidently the reporter tried to be fair, although he had to be careful in a Church and Tory paper. It is noticed that at the close of the lecture "some feeble, well-meaning folk asked futile questions, the replies to which were far more damaging to the cause of the questioners than anything the lecturer had said." Also that Mr. Foote was received with "storms of applause, well-sustained and long-continued." On the whole, it is rather strange that liberality to Freethinkers should be avoided by the so-called Liberal papers and left to a journal like the *Mercury*. We think we ought to congratulate the editor upon his intellectual hospitality, and the reporter upon the admirable manner in which he fulfilled his duty. He certainly wields a dexterous pen.

It has been very difficult to procure halls for the "Concentration Scheme" in London. Indeed, the metropolis is, in this respect, far more unfavorable to Freethought than most provincial towns. The greatest difficulty of all was to obtain a hall in East London for Sunday evening lectures. At length, however, the large hall of the Aldgate Baths has been secured for four Sunday evenings—November 18 and 25, and December 2 and 9. There are chairs, we believe, to seat 500 people. Full details will be given in next week's *Freethinker*. Meanwhile the East London "saints" should make a note of this arrangement, and spread the news of it amongst their friends in the locality.

A course of week-night lectures has also been arranged to be delivered in the Wellington Hall, Upper-street, Islington, on the evenings of November 12 and 26, and December 3 and 10. Full details of this course will also appear in our next issue. We may add at once, however, that Mr. C. Watts and Mr. C. Cohen, who are definitely engaged for six months under this Scheme, will take part in all these courses of lectures. Mr. Foote will co-operate to the best of his power. He will take one Sunday evening in East London and one week-night at Islington. Down at West Ham, where the Town Hall is being engaged for two week-nights, he proposes to give one lecture himself, and then to go down with Messrs. Watts and Cohen, and other speakers, to hold a Freethought Demonstration. Halls are being sought after in other parts of London. Friends who know of any good places that are available are invited to communicate with us, or with Miss Vance, as soon as possible.

As the first of the Wellington Hall course of lectures is fixed for next Monday (November 12), and the time for

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advertising it is therefore very limited, it is to be hoped that the Secularists in the neighborhood will do their best to give it publicity. Handbills of the whole course can be obtained from Miss Vance for distribution. Mr. Charles Watts is to be the first lecturer. The time is 8 o'clock, and the admission is free. Wellington Hall, by the way, is entered, not from Upper-street, but from Almeida-street.

Mr. C. Cohen delivers three lectures to-day (November 11) in far-north Aberdeen. No details have reached us from any quarter, but the local "Saints" will doubtless find some advertisement in the city.

Mr. A. B. Moss managed to gain a seat on the new Camberwell Borough Council. We congratulate him on his success. Last Sunday morning he addressed a large audience on Mile End Waste in favor of the School Board candidature of Mr. George Hewitt. Mr. Moss informs us that he regards Mr. Hewitt as a very able young man, who would make a very useful member of the School Board. Of course he is strongly in favor of "Secular Education."

Mr. G. J. Warren has gained a seat on the Stepney Borough Council, with the biggest vote yet recorded for him: in fact, he was at the head of the poll. Mr. James Neate, another N. S. S. vice-president, has gained a seat in *his* division. We congratulate them both—and their Councils on having them. We regret to note that Mr. Victor Roger failed, with other Progressives, in Lambeth.

The Camberwell Branch held its annual meeting on Sunday morning. Mr. Victor Roger was re-elected president, Mr. Herbert vice-president, and Mr. Wilmot secretary. The last was highly complimented on his services to the Branch. Mr. Woodward kindly undertook to act as assistant-secretary. It was resolved that a South London Secular Federation should be formed, in order to assist Freethought propaganda in the various districts during the winter.

Mr. H. Quelch, the well-known Social Democrat, is a candidate in the East Lambeth Division for a seat on the new London School Board. He makes a special feature of "Secular Education" in his program, and we hope he will receive the support of the local Freethinkers. They may not all be able to see eye to eye with him on *every* point, but this one point is *all-important*.

Mr. J. Allanson Picton, writing to Mr. F. J. Gould, who is trying to win a seat on the new Leicester School Board, points out that the Nonconformists, by having their own views of the Bible endowed in the schools, have destroyed their objection to State endowments of religion. "If there is no other candidate taking your line on this question," Mr. Picton says, "and had I a vote, I should plump for you."

A member of the West Ham Branch was riding on a 'bus from Stationers' Hall Court to Liverpool-street, when a sanctimonious passenger handed the conductor a couple of tracts—"one for you and one for the driver." The conductor looked at his prize and smiled. He had seen that sort of thing before. The member of the W. H. B. thereupon handed the conductor two "specimen" copies of the *Freethinker* which he had just obtained from Miss Vance. To the horror of an old lady who sat in the opposite corner, the conductor plunged into our "Old Dowie" article, and so enjoyed it that he said he would pass it on to some friends.

We have lost sight for some time of that clever little lady, Mrs. Louisa Samson, who will be remembered by some of the frequenters of the Hall of Science. Mrs. Samson, we hear, was the "Agnostic lady" who enlivened the St. James's Hall meeting at which "Professor" Atkinson expected to have a sort of faith-healing match with Old Dowie. Mrs. Samson remarked that both these faith-healers were at one in pretending to divine assistance—which she ventured to doubt. There were loud cries of "Chair!" but she gained time to throw in her bombshell and see it explode.

"The records of 'Old Boys,'" says Katherine Carson, in the *Temple Magazine*, for November, in an account of the Royal Caledonian Asylum, "include several who have distinguished themselves in the world of art and literature. Charles Mackay, the well-known poet and journalist, father to the late Eric Mackay, the poet, was a Caledonian boy. James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, received his education in the school. The Army and the Navy have been recruited from the school, and Caledonian boys have served in nearly every famous Scottish regiment.

Secular Thought (Toronto) reaches us fitfully. We have just received three numbers together, all dated September. We hope this means that Editor Ellis has sold out, and found it difficult to send us copies. One of the numbers reproduces Mr. Gould's "Talk About Heaven" from our columns. From another number we note with pleasure that the Toronto Secular Society still holds Sunday evening meetings.

The *Life and Letters* of the late Professor Huxley, edited by his son, Mr. Leonard Huxley, is not a book intended for the mob. It is published in two volumes at 30s. net. We have not been favored with a copy for review, although ours is the only Freethought journal in England with anything like a good circulation. Nevertheless, we shall give our readers a view of the contents of these bulky and expensive volumes, and we are now looking through them in pursuit of that object.

The *Secular Almanack* for 1901, issued by the Executive of the National Secular Society, and edited by Mr. Foote, will be on sale next week. In addition to the Calendar and detailed information respecting Freethought Organisations at Home and Abroad, this issue includes special articles by Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, Moss, and Heaford, and "Chilperic" and "Mimnermus." Freethinkers should place their orders for this publication at once. It is well worth the small price of threepence, and any profit realised by the sale will accrue to the N. S. S.

Editor Charles C. Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, Kentucky, has successfully resisted the attempt at putting him in prison again. His enemies charged him with sending obscene matter through the mails, being afraid to charge him with "blasphemy." Mr. Moore has proved that what he printed was *not* obscene, and has won his case in court, to the satisfaction of his friends and the dismay of his bigoted and hypocritical opponents.

Shilling Week, or Shilling Month, as it turned out, is now practically over, and we propose to make a final statement about it next week. Meanwhile it may be noted that a second (and last) Shilling Week in aid of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund is fixed for the first seven days in the new year.

Freethinkers might bear in mind that the Freethought Publishing Company does not seek to confine its business to its own publications. It is ready to execute orders for all kinds of advanced literature. Freethinkers who are obtaining this class of books, by post or otherwise, should try the experiment of placing their orders with the Company. Such action on their part would tend to counteract the "respectable" boycott.

Beware of China.

MR. G. W. FOOTE, President of the National Secular Society, lectured at the Leicester Secular Hall last Sunday morning, on "China and the Christian Powers." The feeling which was now banding the Chinese together against Europeans, said Mr. Foote, was what ought to be called patriotism, but we called it devilry. The Chinese were gradually being made into a military nation by the mere force of Christian aggression. Naturally the Chinese were peaceably inclined, but the instinct of self-preservation was throwing them back on military defence. In time they would possess powerful artillery, and millions of rifles and bayonets. They had a population of 400,000,000, and out of this number it was easy to raise an army of 20,000,000. Europeans were preparing a scourge for themselves. Militarism would be met by militarism. Perhaps, observed Mr. Foote, half sadly, half cynically, every nation on earth must be militarised before war could cease. The Powers would never be able to partition China; they could never make any practical impression on so vast an empire, and so numerous a population. "China," said an Oriental proverb, "was like the sea; it salts everything that passes into it."

Having thus warned his audience against the Yellow Terror, Mr. Foote declared that China not only merited fair-dealing, but even indulgence. This vast empire had come down from an immemorial past, protected by the strength of its conservatism. It was now face to face with civilisations of another type, and it was no easy task for her to range herself in harmony with these foreign forces. No doubt she would, in time, yield to that cosmopolitan movement which tended to open every country to the inhabitants of all other countries, for purposes of peaceable trade and transit and enlightened curiosity. But the process must not be violently hastened. They must be very callous or stupid who were indifferent to the possibility of throwing more than a quarter of the world's inhabitants (such was China's proportion) into political and social anarchy.

—*Leicester Guardian, November 3, 1900.*

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing him against copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

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Gaps in the Gospels.

"There is no task in the world so difficult as, with the materials available to us, to write a consistent and natural-seeming biography of Christ. In addition to the immense task of harmonising the sources and of filling their wide yawning gaps, there remains for the modern mind the almost insuperable problem of making a history which, at every point, touches the miraculous and transcendental, to work out as an actual historical reality."—*Christian World, November 1, 1900.*

PROFESSOR RHEES has written the seventh volume in the *Historical Series for Bible Students*, published by Smith, Elder, and Co. The above quotation forms part of the *Christian World* review of that book. It is not exactly Professor Rhees's view of the Gospels, and may disturb the confidence of his Bible-students if they read it. But the book itself is intended for embryo preachers of the Word, who will in time occupy the pulpit. The review is evidently intended for those who are not likely at any time to occupy the pew.

The *Christian World* statements are worth considering. They indicate a marvellous advance in general theological thought. Sometimes, after reading the weekly contributions of "J. B.," who is well known as the Rev. J. Brierley, a retired minister, it is difficult to understand how the journal which publishes them can continue to be the popular and influential representative of Christian thought that it is. The book review referred to is another evidence of the approach to advanced ideas which seems now to be the prevailing policy of the *C. W.*, as, indeed, it is of all religious journals that desire to keep abréast with the times.

Freethinkers have long ago declared that it was difficult to write a "consistent and natural-seeming biography of Christ." Renan tried it, but, with all his analytic skill, his surpassing elegance and charm of style, and his gentle, poetic treatment of absurd stories that never deserved it, he was called "Infidel" for his pains, and in bigoted circles is so denominated still. Strauss scarcely strived to present a "consistent and natural-seeming biography." He found that impossible, and devoted himself to accounting mythologically for the more striking features presented in the synoptic narratives. Evan Powell Meredith made a great effort to bring all the conflicting stories of the Evangelists into a coherent whole, but he ended, like many others, in presenting a thoroughly Freethought view of the "Prophet of Nazareth" as distinguished from any "consistent and natural-seeming" biography such as orthodox believers seem to desire.

Then there have been hundreds of religious writers who have tried to evolve from the chaos of the Gospels a consistent life of Christ. Dean Farrar is the latest, and, in spite of his plethora of words, his absolutely gratuitous assumptions, his rhetorical flourishes and periphrastic embellishments, he is, by the verdict of competent critics of his own Church, the greatest failure of all.

There is no "consistent and natural-seeming biography" of Christ, simply because the materials are not available. The pictures of Christ presented to the world by preachers, poets, painters, are mostly pure conjecture—mere fanciful creations, ostensibly built upon the Gospels, but adding many features not to be found in those fragmentary and irreconcilable stories in which there are so many "yawning gaps."

Just now there is much talk of missionary enterprise. Let us imagine a missionary approaching an educated Hindoo and saying: "I want you to believe in Christ. I cannot give you a consistent and natural-seeming biography of him. The materials are not available. I cannot harmonise the sources, nor fill up wide, yawning gaps. It is with us an insuperable problem how to make out an actual historical reality in regard to his advent and existence on earth. Our trouble is that the accounts we have touch at every point the miraculous and the transcendental. We are still trying to harmonise and fill up blank spaces. In the meantime, please believe in Christ; later on, we will mail you our revised versions of his history. To assist you, in the meantime, you may like to know that there are many people in our own Christian England, and in America and Australia, who are not at all assured that this Christ, of whom we speak, ever had any existence at all."

This is what should, in honesty, be told the native heathen whom we propose to convert. But, of course, we never tell them. If we did, there would be an end to missionary enterprise—also to the surprise at Exeter Hall that missionaries are treated very badly in countries they invade with obviously lame stories, which must seem little less than frauds.

But we don't want to talk to the educated Hindoo—who could give us points in regard to many things—but to common-sense people in our own country. And to them we would propound certain queries. Suppose a God desired to convey his will to mankind. Would he do it in the way that parsons pretend he has? Would he behave so stupidly? We know that earthly testators, even assisted by lawyers, often leave wills which are open to be contested. If "God's" will was brought into the Probate Division of her Majesty's Courts of Justice, what would happen? The Law Courts would have to be so extended that they would cover the greater part of London.

Whatever God's will was, he was perfectly able to make it clear. He hasn't done so—that is made obvious by all the conflicting sects. His Gospel is full of "yawning gaps." There are insuperable problems in the way of making an actual historical reality out of the life of his Son. Let anyone read the four Gospels and ask himself if this, the meagre material that he finds there, adequately covers the ground. The synoptic accounts traverse very much the same story. They over-lap; and they contradict each other to such an extent, indeed, that one is almost inclined to say the "truth is not in them." The Gospel of St. John, for example, presents an entirely different view of Christ to that of the other Evangelists. The four Gospels, even with the addendum of the Acts of the Apostles, give but a meagre and miserably inadequate account of Christ. We don't know what he was doing for a considerable part of the very short time he was supposed to be on earth. There are great gaps in the Gospels. It is too late now for them to be filled.

And now, if it is not blasphemous to do so, we would submit the following queries to the Almighty. "Why," we say to him, "if you had a gospel to give to mankind, a will to reveal, a religion to establish, if you wanted praise and prayer, knee-drill and belly-creeping, why didn't you arrange for it properly? Why are the Gospels, in which you offer us eternal life, so remarkable for their 'yawning gaps'? Why didn't we have more information about your Son? Why is the information that we have so conflicting? Why should it be an insuperable problem to make the story of your Son's existence 'an actual historical reality'? Why, if you had a Gospel for the world, did you delay publication? Many myriads died before you could have readers. And now nearly half the world knows nothing about you, and a great portion of the other half, knowing you, acts as if you were non-existent."

God has much to answer for. Cross-examined in the witness-box, he might disclose a great deal that we don't at present know, and some things which might be self-incriminating. All the same, when he proposed to give his will to mankind he might have made it clearer, and not have left so many "yawning gaps" in the biography of his son, and so many doubts as to what he himself really desires.

FRANCIS NEALE.

International Freethought Federation.

THE organ of this body will be launched next January, and will be edited at Brussels. Monsieur Léon Furnémont asks me to invite the support of English Freethinkers for this venture. Generous support has been given to the project in Belgium and France, and assistance is promised from Spain. May I appeal to our friends for subscriptions towards this end, in order to show practically our solidarity with continental Freethought?

Monsieur Furnémont is the Deputy for Charleroi, and will be the editor of the new paper. It will be published in French, and called *La Raison*. Shares may be taken at ten francs each (6s. 8d.). Mr. Hartmann, who has promised £4, has kindly consented to act as Treasurer. Contributions to *La Raison* Fund should be sent to Mr. Samuel Hartmann, Manchester Hotel, Aldersgate-street, E.C.

Literary contributions (in French) will appear from English Freethinkers.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

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On "Liberal" Catholicism.

ONE of the farces of current literature is the spectacle —comparatively common in the last twenty or thirty years—of "eminent persons" ponderously arguing in the heavier reviews themes which nine out of ten intelligent Zulus would laugh over. This month an elderly gentleman will spin out twenty pages on "The Validity of Anglican Orders" or "The Theological Significance of the Reservation of the Sacraments," and next month another elderly gentleman will seriously spin out twenty pages to confute the first. Who the readers may be that are interested in this kind of thing it is not easy to say. There are philosophical, and even theological, controversies which are of vital and intellectual interest. But the common type of theological wrangle is farcically thin. Of this latter order, it must be confessed, was much of the late Professor Mivart's writing on theological matters. His intensely serious speculations about happiness in hell seemed to onlookers ludicrous in the extreme. The spectacle of a scientist of sober years wading through Latin tomes to prove that it was "permissible" to believe such-and-such concerning some pretended place or state about which no one, admittedly, knew anything whatever, was like a scene from an *opera-bouffe*. Indeed, if one might put it so, Professor Mivart's theological excursions did more credit to his heart than his head. His heart felt the hideous brutality of the hell-doctrine, but it never seemed to have occurred to his reason that hell was a myth; he but tried to modify a horrible superstition in accordance with an innate humane feeling, without perceiving that the superstition in itself was baseless. And much the same falls to be said of the series of articles which brought him into public prominence shortly before his death. There was something positively pathetic in Professor Mivart proclaiming, with intense earnestness and an evident sense of novelty, propositions which were commonplaces with intelligent artisans in Richard Carlile's time. Professor Mivart, after a fairly long life, in which he mixed with men like Huxley, discovered in the year 1900 that there were discrepancies between the Bible and Science, and that the Bible was false in these respects. And it was even more pathetic to read that the intellectual and nervous convulsion following this discovery helped to accelerate the Professor's death.

But the articles of Dr. Mivart set up in the *Nineteenth Century* one of those controversies to which reference has been made. For, astonishing as it may seem, within the Catholic Church itself—the very embodiment, as it is, of dogmatic authority, and demanding the most absolute obedience of its adherents—within this Church, too, there are positively stirrings of intellectual life. So true is it, as has been said, that nothing on earth—and, with all its pretences, the Catholic Church is but of earth like the rest—nothing can resist the wild, living intellect of man. Cover a dogma up with ever so many coverings, guard it with ever so much care, defend it with ever so much "authority," and in the centre of your own household, amongst the trusted of your own hearth, men will be impelled by force of nature to examine, and some, defying all your coverings and your care and your authority, will have the courage to ask, *Is it true?*

Some impulse of this kind towards truth, towards the recognition of established facts which do not at present fit in with the Church's teaching, has shown itself latterly amongst some Catholics of note. Many, in fact most, of them stop short of Mivart's position. They only want "reform." Omniscience, having a desperately-important message to communicate to mankind, and having deputed an organisation in Rome to convey it, has yet allowed some abuses and scandals to gather round this organisation which must be removed.

In the July number of the *Nineteenth Century* this type of Catholic "liberal," as it is called, is represented by a Mr. R. E. Dell, late editor of the *Catholic Weekly Register*, who writes by way of reply to Mr. Wilfrid Ward. Mr. Ward is one of the self-constituted champions of Catholic orthodoxy, a defender of everything that is, as the best that can be. He is a fluent writer of his kind, and if it were dogmatically taught by the Church that the moon was made of green cheese, Mr. Ward is the type that would elaborately and lugubriously prove that this must be so, and that the fact of the moon's being made of green cheese was essential to a proper recognition of the metaphysical laws of the subjective interdependence of the self-existent objective *ego*. I do not vouch that these are the exact verbal contrivances that would be employed, but I can vouch that they would be very like these. It is wonderful the awe and respect that can be won for the veriest nonsense if it is elaborately set forth with high-sounding words and learned-looking phrases.

Mr. Dell, who is presumably one of the "liberal Catholics," and one of the persons against whom Mr. Ward directs his homilies, furnishes in his article an interesting spectacle of the hopelessness of its author's position. Here is a summary of the state of affairs that obtains at the seat of Catholic authority:—

> "In the *Life of Cardinal Manning*, and more particularly in his correspondence with Monsignor Talbot, Rome has been laid bare to the world as the centre of peculiarly petty intrigue, and that, in particular, in the immediate *entourage* of the Pope. Cardinal Newman has told us of the malaria that gathers round the Rock of Peter, the incapacity of the Roman authorities in dealing with England, and the crowd of sycophants to be found round about the Vatican. The existence and intrigues of the modern Ultramontane party are no secret; they can be studied by anyone in some of the books I have mentioned, and nowhere better than in the letters and other writings of its own adherents—'that blustering band of Catholic bullies' was Montalembert's description of it."*

All this, of course, is indubitably true, though it is interesting to have a professed Catholic set it down. But Mr. Dell never stops to perceive the theological bearing of it all. Here, then, is the method by which a deity of infinite wisdom and power communicates with mankind! He works through an organisation torn by petty squabbles and low personal intrigues, broils over office, diplomatic bickerings over ecclesiastical spoils, and all the corruption that inevitably gathers round any office of power unchecked by external criticism. In what, on Mr. Dell's picture, does the Vatican differ from any other human organisation in the world? If he contends, to use Herbert Spencer's words in a similar argument against Christianity as a whole, that the Vatican's "likenesses to the rest [of human organisations] hide a transcendent unlikeness," then he may be met with Spencer's crushing answer:—

> "For if these numerous parallelisms.....do not prove likeness of origin and development, then the implication is that a complete simulation of the natural by the supernatural has been deliberately devised to deceive those who examine critically what they are taught. Appearances have been arranged for the purpose of misleading sincere inquirers, that they may be eternally damned for seeking the truth."†

These words surely pithily demolish the halting absurdities of the "reforming" Catholic. The fact is that "liberal Catholicism" is the veriest intellectual foible, and we gravely doubt whether it ever existed other than on paper. For the very words embody a self-contradiction. Mr. Dell, if he pursues his reflections at all, must recognise the conclusion to which he moves. You cannot combine independent thinking with unquestioning obedience; the two are opposites. And, indeed, the fate of the so-called "liberal Catholics" of the past might furnish the "liberal Catholics" of the present with a lesson. It is claimed that Newman, Montalembert, and others of distinction, belonged to the school. The barrenness of their permanent achievement is ominous. With all their works, Mr. Dell can still paint the woful picture which his article discloses. The Christians are often given to quoting the text, in a purely academic way, that a man cannot serve God and Mammon; though it must be confessed that, in a purely practical way, many make a bold attempt, and do not, as far as can be judged, egregiously fail. But, whatever may be said of that text, there is an irrefutable truth that may be commended to Mr. Dell and his school: a man cannot serve Rome and Reason. A man cannot think and be a slave at the same time; and, in proportion as he begins to think, in proportion he ceases to be a slave. Liberal Catholicism is merely ordinary Catholicism in process of decomposition.

FREDERICK RYAN.

* *Nineteenth Century*, July, 1900, p. 128.
† *Principles of Sociology*, vol. iii., p. 36.

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Sultan Solomon.

(Concluded from page 700.)

JOSEPHUS gives a ridiculous account of Solomon's temple. He speaks of its "Corinthian" architecture, although that order did not exist till centuries later. He tells us of 20,000 gold and 40,000 silver tables; 10,000 gold candlesticks; 60,000 large gold basins; 70,000 gold censers; 1,000 suits of sacerdotal raiment for the high priest, and 10,000 for his inferiors; and 200,000 trumpets for the Levites. But this extravagance is more than equalled by the Scripture. Reckoning the Jewish talent of gold, according to Cruden, as £7,200, and the silver talent as £450, it appears that David prepared £720,000,000 in gold and £450,000,000 in silver for the temple. Prideaux reckoned it as over £800,000,000, which exceeds the amount of our National Debt. All this was "saved" by one king of a small, infertile, and barbarous country, although Mongredien reckons that the total value of all the gold and silver in the British Isles barely amounts to £143,000,000! Dr. Farrar allows that David's savings amounted "on the very lowest computation to £120,000,000," and adds that "if the Jewish talent be meant" it amounted to "more than a billion pounds." Such figures are imaginary. Milman admits that they "pass all credibility." The mention of *darics*—coins named after Darius—shows that the fable was concocted many centuries afterwards.

Solomon's annual revenue is represented as 666 talents of gold, which Dr. Farrar reckons as about £5,000,000. This is trifling compared with David's revenue, according to the previous figures, but it is still excessive. A petty district of Asia Minor could not have yielded a greater revenue than the Romans derived from the whole of their Asiatic provinces.

Similar gasconade is found in the building of the temple. Over 180,000 men were employed on its construction for eleven years, seven years being occupied in its erection, and four years in preparations. Yet the temple itself was only 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high. "The actual building," says Dr. Farrar, "was of very small size"; indeed, "it was much smaller than many an English church."

Solomon presented his temple to the Lord as "a settled place for thee to abide in for ever." But the edifice soon disappeared, and the Lord had to seek fresh lodgings. Dr. Farrar calls it "the visible House of God, the place where His honor dwelt." We hope his honor liked it. But he must have had a callous nose to stand the "steaming putrescence" of the Temple Court, which the constant and plentiful sacrifices must have made like "a ghastly slaughter-house."

According to Scripture, this temple was the first ever erected by the Jews; but Dr. Robertson Smith says "there were temples among the Hebrews before the time of Solomon," and in point of size his "can hardly have surpassed them." Its architecture was purely Phœnician, and "for the general arrangements the temple of Hierapolis described by Lucian offers a complete parallel." Dr. Farrar makes the same admission, on the authority of architects like Fergusson and Robins. Such as it was, the Jews regarded it as the centre of the universe, just as the Greeks regarded the temple of Delphi as the navel (*omphalos*) of the world.

Seven years being spent on the temple, Solomon spent thirteen years on his own palace, which was a much larger structure; the reason being that Jahveh was a single gentleman, while Solomon had a large domestic establishment. He had seven hundred wives over the right shoulder, and three hundred over the left. According to the Canticles (vi. 8), they were "threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number." Every sensible man finds one wife sufficient, and Solomon must have been the wisest fool that ever lived. His harem was the largest on record, the second being that of Darius Codomanus, who had one wife and 329 concubines. Dr. Farrar, who makes very free with the word of God, supposes that "for seven hundred we should read seventy." But even this number would get Solomon in prison nowadays.

Solomon's seven hundred wives were all "princesses." Princesses must have been very cheap in that age, when one man could marry so many. Such a seraglio had to be jealously guarded. No wonder, then, that *eunuchs* made their appearance in Solomon's court. These degraded creatures are, we presume, a fresh evidence of his wisdom and humanity.

The Bible does not reprove Solomon for his polygamy. It only censures him because they were "strange women" who "turned away his heart." Had they been Jewesses, and had he not built altars for their foreign gods, he might have indulged his lust without stint. The God of Israel had no objection to polygamy. He allowed the Jews many wives, but only one god—namely, himself. That was the sole point on which he was savagely inexorable.

Solomon's harem and palaces were very costly to his people. Provision was made in the royal household, says Dr. Farrar, for "at least ten thousand persons." Milman says that "the people suffered deeply from the arbitrary exactions of the king." The surviving natives of Palestine were treated worse than the Jews. They were the helots of the state, and their lives were made bitter with bondage. Solomon also surrounded himself with a mercenary bodyguard. The *Gibborim*, like the Roman *bravi*, were chiefly foreigners, and always ready to execute their master's despotic commands.

Solomon's wisdom, like his wealth, is apocryphal. The only sensible thing recorded of him in the Bible is his judgment in the case of the two mothers who claimed the same child. But a similar story is related of Buddha, and it may have been floating about in the east for millenniums.

Scripture says that "he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five." The next verse makes him a learned naturalist; and oriental tradition, improving on this, makes him hold confabulations with all sorts of animals. None of Solomon's "wisdom," however, has descended to posterity. Three books of the Old Testament are ascribed to him, but modern criticism has exploded his claim to their authorship. Dr. A. B. Davidson says it is "a mere conjecture" that he was "the father of didactic poetry among the Hebrews." Canon Cheyne also allows that "it is indeed a pure hypothesis that any Solomonic element survives in the Book of Proverbs." The Book of Ecclesiastes is a very late production. Even Luther, in his *Table Talk*, admitted that "Solomon did not write it himself." Grätz assigns it to the period of Herod the Great. Dean Plumptre places it between 240 and 181 B.C. Delitzsch, Ginsburg, Ewald, Keil, Tyler, Farrar, and Cheyne, like all other competent critics, agree that it was written after the Exile. Rabbi Kimchi ascribed it to Isaiah, and the Talmudical writers to Hezekiah. That Solomon wrote it, or any part of it, is universally denied. Nor did he write the Song of Solomon. Grätz, the Jewish historian, dates it no earlier than the second or third century before Christ, though Ewald carries it back within a century of Solomon's reign. Dr. Farrar accepts this date, but says it is "in the highest degree improbable that it was composed by Solomon himself." It contains some splendid poetry, though it is a curious song for the word of God. The imagery is voluptuous and sometimes lascivious. Our translation throws a veil over some of the original passages, and the headings of the chapters would persuade the reader that the amorous descriptions are mystical. But this is a pious imposture, against which Dr. Farrar protests as "absolutely shocking." According to Jerome, the Jews were forbidden to read this book until they were thirty. Christians, however, place it in the hands of their children as an incentive to modesty. Origen went so far as to say that "all the Scriptures are holy, but *this sublime song is the Holy of Holies.*" Probably he said this before he castrated himself for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

Solomon died after reigning forty years, though Josephus says he reigned eighty years. For worshipping strange gods his kingdom was rent asunder after his death, and some have doubted whether he went to heaven. A Christian writer, Philippus, has written a discussion on the Damnation of Solomon. Dante, however, put him in Paradise, without reflecting that Solomon might be unhappy in a world where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

Here endeth the life of Solomon. His history is a tissue of romance; his wealth is apocryphal; his wisdom is legendary; and his morality is disgusting. Even Farrar is constrained to describe him as "like a painted tyrant or the figure of an idol in a gilded pageant—a king on whom we gaze as on a spectacle, but whom it is impossible to love."

—*From "Bible Heroes," by* G. W. FOOTE.

Better than the Chosen.

THE kingdom is within us, and the Law,
One Moral Law, one universal Law;
The one sure law, that truth is good,
And evil evil, as with God with man;
And that all evil must bring forth its kind;
That God confounds not his own elements,
Nor introverts the moral sense of man;
Nor grieves, repents, nor tempts, nor hardens hearts,
Nor sends forth lying spirits to betray.
And once shall rise to noon some higher sense
Than the vile, chosen Jews could ever dream,
Than fear or hope, the slave's and Hebrew's thoughts,
Base fear of pain or Jewish hope of gain,
Than aught that can, or aught that would, rely
On other's pains, on bloody sacrifice
Of bulls or lambs or sacred innocence,
Or the poor hunted scape-goat's agonies,
Or the drear anguish and the dark, long deaths
Of glorious victims to the demon Priest.

—*T. J. Powys.*

Beware, when speaking of other men, that thou dost not make them the subjects of praise or blame.—*Epictetus.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, Charles Watts, "The Death of Jehovah."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Herbert Rix, "A Persian Heroine."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 3.30 and 7, J. W. Cox.

COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): G. Gibson, "Rise and Fall of Religions."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: 11, (Bull Ring). H. P. Ward, "Priest-craft and Education"; 7, (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street), W. E. Radcliffe.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, H. T. Muggeridge, "The Great Confidence Trick."

COVENTRY (Assembly Rooms, West Orchard): H. Percy Ward —3, "Why I Dare Not be a Christian"; 7, "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secular Platform."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 11, Discussion Class—Impromptu speeches; 6.30, A lecture.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Miss L. A. Goyne, "The Life and Work of Grant Allen."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, S. Reeves, "The Homes of the Workers." 100 lantern slides.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Stanley Jones, "Buddhism and Christianity."

NEWCASTLE (Westminster Hall, Picton-place): 7, Discussion between Messrs. Boyce and Mitchell on "Has Man a Soul?"

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): John Axe, A lecture or reading.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "Pictures"; 7.30, A reading.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—November 11, Aberdeen.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—November 11, m., Birmingham; a. and e., Coventry. 18, Birmingham. 25, Sheffield. 26 and 27, Debate at Sheffield. December 9, Glasgow; 16, Liverpool.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 46. SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ.

WE have no personal acquaintance with either of these celebrities; and, at least in that respect, we shall be able to speak of them both with absolute impartiality.

Marie Corelli is still living. Jesus Christ was long ago reported to be dead. She is a single lady, and he was a single gentleman. Nor is this the end of their resemblance. He was despised and rejected of men—and so is she. It is at once her boast and her lamentation; her boast, as displaying her own sublime merits; her lamentation, as exhibiting the world's folly and wickedness. Indeed, she looks abroad upon this wretched globe, and exclaims, "This is no place for me."

The living lady pretends to a very close acquaintance with the dead gentleman. She almost affects to be his proxy. If you want to know what he would say and do, if he were still on earth, you should inquire of her, and not of such uninspired persons as the Rev. C. M. Sheldon or Mr. Hall Caine. What *she* cannot tell you is really not worth knowing.

We have mentioned Mr. Hall Caine: and thereby hangs a tale. Mr. Caine belongs to the beautiful Isle of Man—and it *is* beautiful; the isle of lovely women and modest men; Mr. Caine's heroines being specimens of the one sex, and himself a specimen of the other. Mr. Caine is a Christian. How much of Christianity he believes is not apparent. Still, he is a Christian. He has written a novel called *The Christian*. Not *a* Christian, mark; but *the* Christian. Other samples are spurious. This is the real, original, unadulterated article. *The* Christian of Mr. Caine's novel is a mad parson, with the peaceful name of John, and the turbulent name of Storm. The John is a decent fellow, but the Storm is ripe for an asylum. He escapes it, however, by dying like a Christian—that is to say, he is beaten and kicked to death by a mob of (doubtless) professed Christians, who were once his admirers, but who turned upon him at the finish, as the Jews turned upon Jesus Christ after giving him a magnificent reception only a few days before, when he rode into Jerusalem on a brace of donkeys.

Wild and nonsensical as this novel was, it nevertheless hit a popular taste; for Christianity as a dogmatic religion is dead, and it only survives as a fashionable sentimentality. Mr. Caine's novel sold like hot muffins, and he netted a profit of several thousand pounds. It was not likely, therefore, that other novelists would neglect so remunerative a vein. "There's money in it" is a call to all adventurers; more certain and imperative than any call from the Holy Ghost. And out of the throng of aspirants there emerged the dauntless Marie Corelli. Mr. Caine had written *The Christian*. But she could do better than that. Accordingly she wrote *The Master Christian*. Beyond which it is difficult to see how anyone can go, unless somebody writes *The Mistress Christian*. This, of course, would take the precedence, on the principle of *place aux dames*. For the present, however, Marie Corelli—whose real name, by the way, is something more prosaic—easily holds the field. Mr. Caine's hero was, after all, a disciple. Her hero, if we may speak so profanely, is the Master himself. Perhaps *The Mistress Christian*—the idea of which we cheerfully present to the lady novelists—should relate the career of a still more transcendent personage—namely, the Mother of God, the wonderful first woman in the world who was born without sin and shapen without iniquity. Of course there would be some risky episodes, but the lady novelists are equal to all these things.

Marie Corelli is reaping her reward for going one better than Hall Caine. Her publishers announce that the sale of the novel is unparalleled. There has never been anything at all like it. Scott, Byron, Thackeray, Dickens, and George Eliot are quite out of the running. It is Eclipse first, and the rest nowhere. Money is pouring into the lady's exchequer like a flood. And she is happy. She condescends to smile. She mitigates the severity of her gaze upon the male half of creation. She even patronises Shakespeare. Such is the mollifying influence of personal and financial success.

Hall Caine does not like this. It is not natural that he should. On the other hand, Marie Corelli does not like *him*. And this also is natural. They are rival exploiters of Jesus Christ. They trade with similar goods in the same market. It is not to be expected that any love should be lost between competitive hucksters. Hall Caine quarrelled with Wilson Barrett. Marie Corelli has quarrelled with Hall Caine. Who will be the next good Christian to quarrel with Marie Corelli?

We suspected that Marie Corelli would make a bold attempt on Mr. Caine's laurels—and emoluments. We had read—that is to say, we had turned over the pages of—her *Barabbas*, in which she presented the figure of Jesus Christ himself. She made him act and talk, from the Court of Pontius Pilate to the Garden of Gethsemane. The sun is said to have hidden its face at the sight of the crucified Redeemer, but Marie Corelli went on staring and chattering to the end of the chapter. There was no reason in the world, then, why she should not write a sort of continuation, and relate the adventures of Jesus Christ two thousand years later.

In *The Master Christian* the "Savior of the world"—which is still awaiting salvation—is introduced as a homeless, friendless boy named Manuel. The name was enough. When we read it we exclaimed, "There he is at last." We saw that Hall Caine was done for. This boy Manuel is a wonderful youth. He was bound, first of all, to be beautiful. In *Barabbas* the lady novelist had gloated over the physical perfections of Jesus Christ, particularly when he was stripped for the crucifixion. This was all right from the novelist's point of view. From the point of view of Christian history—or Christian tradition, whichever you please—it was absurd. In fulfilment of prophecy, if for no other

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reason, the Prophet of Nazareth was represented as neither comely nor desirable. But that would never do for a nineteenth (or twentieth) century romance. Ladies, at any rate, insist on having the hero a noble specimen of manhood. They prefer a cross between Sandow and Apollo. Class distinctions do not count in this matter. The eternal feminine is in one respect homogeneous; and the heroes of the early novels of Ouida are a match for those of the cheap novels affected by servant girls, who like them tall, dark, and soldierly, and positively scorn a hero under six feet. High-class ladies go to palmists; low-class ladies go to fortune-tellers. In both cases the predictions are much alike. There is the promise of a swarthy, big husband, and twelve or fourteen fine, handsome children. And thus they fleet the time merrily as they did in the golden age.

G. W. Foote.

(To be continued.)

Progress of Secularism.

The pains that are taken by many religious people to show that Secularism is a declining force in the country are astonishing. Laborious efforts are made in press and pulpit to prove that the impetus given to anti-Christian feeling by the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* and the growth of the general doctrine of evolution has now spent itself, and the public mind is once more returning to the old faith. One journal demonstrates, to its own satisfaction, that Materialism is now a discredited "doctrine" among scientific thinkers; another, that evolution is powerless to explain some of the more important problems of life; and yet a third, that the more prominent thinkers are turning to find in the "philosophy" of Christ's teachings the clue to most of the moral and social problems of to-day.

Now, these labored attempts to slay the slain are just a little bit suspicious. One might feel that there was more truth in these assertions if those who hold them were content to talk less concerning them. When people *are* convinced that a teaching is dead, they let it alone. No one wastes time in proving that the gods of Greece or Rome are dead; the fact is patent to all; and if those who talk so glibly about Secularism being an almost forgotten form of thought really believed what they say, we should not so often hear them saying it. As it is, their statements only betray their uneasiness. They feel, not that Secularism is dying out, but that it has settled down into a permanent mental condition of large numbers of people, and this in spite of all that misrepresentation and boycott could do to arrest it.

I do not know whether this is the time of the year devoted to sermons on Secularism or not, but several have reached me lately dealing with this subject, all of them professing to find indubitable proofs that it has lost all power in the country, and that even the working classes have come to see that it is Christianity alone that can furnish them with all they most need. One preacher concludes that the questions discussed by Secularists have no longer any interest for the mass of the people, who cannot for ever be content with "mere negations"; another, that Secularism has lost ground because it is attacking a form of faith that Christians have largely outgrown; another, that the Secular movement was never more than a personal following of Mr. Bradlaugh's, which rapidly dissolved after his death.

It would be treating such statements with far more consideration than they deserve were I to discuss their truthfulness—or lack of it—seriously, nor do I intend to spend any time in challenging the accuracy of statements that could only emanate from people who were without any real conception of the nature of Secular propaganda, or who, if they possessed such knowledge, carefully suppressed it. Such statements, trivial as they are in themselves, do, however, open up the question of the object and scope of Secularism, and it is always worth while drawing attention to that. A word may, perhaps, be fitly said on the question of Secularism being a bundle of "mere negations." Such statements are often made, and just as often they betray either ignorance or dishonesty. A teaching that is wholly of a negative character never did and never will exist. Every teaching, in the very act of destroying, establishes. One cannot, for example, criticise the infallibility of the Bible without giving some information as to its real growth and nature. We cannot challenge and destroy the claims of Christianity in the field of social legislation without discussing the nature of social claims and indicating some method of satisfying them. And, on the reverse side, the more definite any teaching is, the more definite and precise are its negations. If those who talk about Secularism being "destructive" or purely negative could be brought to realise that whether a teaching is classed as constructive or destructive depends entirely upon whether we criticise it from the standpoint of the old or of the new—from what is or from what we would wish to be—such complaints would soon disappear.

But with regard to Secularism. Nearly all of those who criticise the growth of Secularism do so from an altogether wrong standpoint. Nothing could be more fallacious than to estimate the growth of Secularism by the number of avowed Secularists, or even by the number of local Secular organisations. That people, even non-Christians, do so is simply the result of their applying here the same judgment that served in Church matters. A Church with a number of definite doctrines to teach—doctrines that are accepted as the result of an act of faith rather than as the result of intellectual growth—naturally estimates its success by its membership. The one aim is to build up a strong *Church*. But with Secularism the case is vastly different. Here the essential point is not the gaining of members, but the propaganda of opinion. As I have pointed out more than once, I do not regard it as the mission of Secularism to build up a new Church with a slightly different ritual to those already existing. That is, after all, only cultivating the sectarian spirit in a new direction; and, whether I find this sectarian spirit manifested in connection with supernatural beliefs or Rationalist organisations, it is equally objectionable. I do not undervalue either organisation or membership. I recognise that both are vitally essential for the purpose of propaganda; but I insist that this is not the end of our work, only the means to an end.

The real end at which we are aiming is the establishment of a certain mental attitude—the submitting of all questions to the supreme test of their ability to minister to human happiness, with the exclusion of the supernatural from all departments of life. Consequently, the real question at issue is not the strength of Secular organisations—these must always fluctuate more or less—but the degree to which our propaganda has influenced public opinion. Tried by this test, I do not think that we have much cause for complaint. The National Secular Society is barely forty years of age; but, comparing the close of this period with the opening, I venture to say that hardly anywhere in history has the efforts of a handful of men and women ever been crowned with greater success. True, Christianity still lives, and is still able to present a powerful front to its enemies; but it is Christianity as represented in wealthy organisations rather than Christianity as a sincere conviction that has to be faced. If, as one preacher states, people have ceased to be "vitally interested in many of the things which formed the staple of the oratory of Mrs. Besant and the late Mr. Charles Bradlaugh"—even if we grant this to be true, it is only because the Churches have silently surrendered a great deal which they and others attacked as false. We may grant that it would be difficult to interest an educated audience nowadays by a lecture that had for its object the proving of the fallibility of the Bible, the absurdity of miracles, or the revolting nature of the doctrine of eternal damnation. We may grant this readily enough; but this is not because Secularism has grown weaker, or because it has failed in its mission, but because it has so far succeeded as to modify the opinions of even members of Christian Churches.

I am not foolish enough to claim that all the advance that has been made in the growth of Biblical knowledge, the revolt against the cruder and more uncivilised portions of the Christian faith, the rationalising of Sunday, and the growth of liberty of thought and speech, are all entirely due to the efforts of Secular propagandists. But I think we may safely claim that no

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inconsiderable portion of the advance is due to their efforts. After all, what is the advanced thought of the Christian Churches but the minimum concessions they feel compelled to make to the rationalising spirit? Reforms never originate *within* the Churches, but always from without. Both Church and Chapel are engaged principally in trying to keep things as they are, and when they do more the credit is certainly not due to them, but to the active minority outside who are forcing them forward by moulding the public opinion to which they are compelled to appeal for support. As I write there lies before me the electoral address of the new Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, in which he warns his supporters that they must be prepared for great changes in their faith in the near future. It is only one more sign of the influence of the Secularism which we are assured is no more—a fresh sign of the influence of a propaganda which aims, and succeeds, in creating a mental atmosphere in which theological doctrines find it impossible to live.

I repeat, then, that it is but a poor test of the progress of Secularism to count either members or local organisations. In the nature of existing society the number of people who feel that they can come forward and boldly avow themselves Freethinkers must be small, and the fact that it is so reflects far more discredit upon the religious world, which makes honesty of thought and speech such an expensive luxury, than upon any others. Our work I conceive to be that of propagandists pure and simple—to create and mould opinion, not to build up churches or cultivate the sectarian spirit; and, so long as our organisations are strong enough to do this, we have all that we require.

To those who are able to take a comprehensive view of human evolution, who know what a slow, painful process the moulding of opinion is, the progress of Secularism will seem satisfactory enough. But, much as has been done, there is much more that remains to be accomplished. What Christianity fails to secure by an appeal to conviction it seeks to secure by an appeal to self-interest, and by the agency of elaborate organisation. It is against this that we have to fight, and it will be due to our own lack of energy and enterprise if, with the weapons of modern science and a more educated public as an audience, Christianity is not driven completely, as it is partly, outside the practical life of the nation.

C. COHEN.

Superstitious Persistency.

SINCE my articles upon Spiritualism appeared in these columns a few weeks since, over a dozen letters have reached me complaining more or less of my "severe" treatment of the subject. Some of these correspondents avow their inability to understand my position, others state that I have not proved my allegations, and one writer in particular is exceedingly emphatic in reminding me that I overlook the great comfort that Spiritualism affords its believers in the assurance it gives them that the wrongs, shortcomings, and injustice of this life are more than compensated for in an existence "beyond the grave." All my critics say I have not proved that spirits do not exist, and that there is no future life. But as to the last charge, it is not my business to attempt to prove a negative. It is the duty of those who make statements to prove their affirmations.

When dealing with what appears to me to be a superstition, it is necessary, in my opinion, to be as severe as possible in exposing error, providing the severity is confined to the error, and not employed towards the persons who entertain it. While granting the right of all persons to hold what views they may deem right, nothing should preclude the condemnation of such views if they are proved to be erroneous. Personally, I regard Spiritualism as an unmistakable error, and, therefore, to me it is a duty to expose it in a fair and courteous manner. I do not, however, write disrespectfully of Spiritualists as a body, for some may be honest and sincere in their belief. I am reminded that we do not know what matter is in its essence. Granted; but we do know what the term connotes, and we are familiar with the properties, powers, and movements of what is understood by that term. The same cannot be said of what is called spirit. It is stated that I ignore the "facts" of metaphysics. But what are those "facts"? Metaphysics Professor De Morgan defines as being "the science to which ignorance goes to learn its knowledge, and knowledge to learn its ignorance. On which all men agree that it is the key, but no two upon how it is to be put into the lock" (Thomson's *Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 15). Karl Pearson, in his *Grammar of Science*, writes: "Now, one of the idiosyncrasies of metaphysicians lies in this: that each metaphysician has his own system, which, to a large extent, excludes that of his predecessors and colleagues. Hence, we must conclude that metaphysics are either built on air or on quicksands—either they start from no foundation in fact at all, or the superstructure has been raised before a basis has been found in the accurate classification of facts..... The metaphysician is a poet, often a very great one; but, unfortunately, he is not known to be a poet, because he clothes his poetry in the language of apparent reason, and hence it follows that he is liable to be a dangerous member of the community" (pp. 20, 21).

Briefly stated, my reasons for rejecting the belief in Spiritualism are as follows: (1) No one has hitherto defined what a spirit is; (2) it has not been proved that what is termed matter is incapable of producing all possible phenomena; (3) that wherever we find intelligence manifested it is always associated with a material organisation; (4) that consciousness depends upon functional activity which is called life, and that experience proves, when such activity ceases, all consciousness ends; (5) that, brain being necessary to thought, science has demonstrated that in the human organisation a diseased brain is followed by impaired thought, and that, without brain, thinking cannot take place; (6) that the personal testimony which has been given in favor of supposed spiritualistic manifestations is inconclusive, inasmuch as many of those who are said to have beheld the phenomena have been deceived as to the cause or causes of what they saw. This was the case even with such eminent scientists as Alfred Russel Wallace and Professor Crookes.

The following excerpt from Mr. B. F. Underwood's suggestive little work, *Spiritualism from a Materialistic Standpoint*, shows the fallacy of relying upon alleged communications from "the spirit world":—

> "One spirit will tell you one thing, and another something diametrically opposite; and this in regard to matters of fact, and not merely concerning speculative points. For instance, it is still debated among Spiritualists and mediums whether there are brutes in the spirit world, because some spirits say yes, while others as positively say no. And yet we are on the very 'boundaries of another world,' and in daily conversation with its inhabitants.....Thousands of pretended spirits, claiming to be in many cases relatives and friends, say that all the animals of earth continue to exist, as individuals, after death, with dispositions and proclivities such as they possessed on earth—that they see them every day just as they see the spirits of their own race. Other thousands, just as intelligent, and apparently with equal sincerity, say that there are no brutes in the spirit world. Some of our pretended invisible friends and teachers tell us that, animals losing their identity at death, their spirits are resolved into 'elementary primates,' and afford food for the spirits of human beings. Other spirits solemnly declare 'through the mediums' that no food is used or needed in that invisible world. I once heard a distinguished trance speaker say that the relation of the sexes is continued after death; that human beings are there begotten, and ushered into existence, and pass through the stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence, and manhood and womanhood, as they do here. Other communications—one from Socrates, and another from Lord Bacon, among the many—assure me that the notion of births in the world of spirits is false, and must have come from some lying, mischievous spirits. Appealing to men and women of common sense, I ask: Is it not evident that these utterances and messages about the land of spirits are simply the vagaries of the mediums' own brains?" (pp. 12, 13).

A prominent error with Spiritualists is in confounding belief with knowledge. There is a marked difference between the two. It is quite true we may, and do, have faith in that of which we have no real or actual knowledge, for we are compelled to exercise such faith in every-day life upon numerous topics. The point to be remembered is that, if we are judicial or rational, we

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shall be careful that our belief is not opposed to knowledge. A man states that he has seen what he terms spiritualistic manifestations, and he brings a dozen persons to verify his statement. What are we to think in such a case? A moment's reflection may show that the testimony as to what occurred is unimpeachable, while the conclusion as to its cause is perfectly erroneous. The event which he describes may have happened, but how is it to be proved that it was caused by spirits? The forces in operation in its production may be to him unknown, still his evidence could simply vouch for the phenomenon; and the cause must be a matter for inquiry. No sensible person will deny that it is possible we may be unable to explain the cause of many phenomena we see, but that does not justify Spiritualists in assuming that their explanation is the true one. My objection to Spiritualism is that its assumptions have no foundation in fact. Its entire basis rests upon imagination and uncontrolled emotion. If, in their attempt to explain certain mysteries, Spiritualists adopt a method opposed to science and our present knowledge of natural law, we are perfectly justified in asking upon what grounds they do so.

I have been asked to answer the following questions: "Is mind higher than matter, and does it not control matter?" "If the organisation of brain be the cause of mind, is the organisation of the brain less complete in an elephant than it is in man?" I answer that mind is not higher than, but a part of, matter, and that its manifestations are unknown where matter is not. Mind does not always control matter, as in cases of epilepsy, paralysis, and intoxication. *Per se*, the organisation of the brain in an elephant is as complete as in man, but the structure is different. Haeckel, in his *History of Creation*, writes: "Between the most highly-developed animal souls and the lowest-developed human souls there exists only a small quantitative, but no qualitative, difference; and this difference is much less than the difference between the lowest and the highest human souls, or than the difference between the lowest and the highest animal souls" (vol. ii., p. 362). The following, from Edward Clodd's *Pioneers of Evolution*, has also a bearing upon the question: "The science of Comparative Psychology declares that the evidence of his [man's] immortality is neither stronger nor weaker than the evidence of the immortality of the lower animals" (p. 35).

Recognising the fact that from the time when life first appeared on this globe until now progress appears to have been the order of nature, Spiritualists urge it is reasonable to suppose that the same law will continue its operations in some future world. This is another groundless assumption. How, in the name of common sense, can it be proved that because progress goes on in the material world, about the existence of which there can be no doubt, similar progress will be continued in a world of which we know nothing? It is thoroughly absurd to assert that a future existence in a spirit world is proved by the fact that development has been always taking place in the organic kingdom. First came animals low in the scale, then of higher and higher type, and so on up to man. Why, then, it is asked, may not man pass at death into a still higher condition? Now the merest tyro in logic can recognise that there is no analogy whatever in the two cases. The higher animals are not the lower in another stage, but an improvement upon them, a new individuality. The only argument that could logically be drawn from the development theory on this point is that, after man, beings of a still higher order might make their appearance, but then they would no more be individual men of a previous age than we are the Iguanodons of the "age of reptiles." Besides, all the changes that we know of in the organic kingdom have taken place upon the earth, whereas the condition which believers in a future life contend for is to be in some far-off land of shadows occupied by what are termed "disembodied spirits."

Equally fallacious is it to allege that "eternal justice" demands that the wrongs and inequalities of this life should be compensated for in some future state of existence. Mr. Leslie Stephen, in his *Science of Ethics*, says: "Justice, in a sense, means reasonableness." But is it reasonable to suppose that injustice here will be followed by justice hereafter? Upon what grounds does such a notion rest? Moreover, does not the fact that injustice obtains here destroy the theory of "eternal justice"? Further, *why* should we have to suffer wrong here which is to be compensated for in some other life? Is it not more reasonable to believe that the evils endured on earth are largely the result of man's own ignorance, indifference, and false conceptions of the duties of life? Some Spiritualists contend that, in accordance with the law of "fitness of things," each person reaps what he has sown, and therefore, if there is no opportunity for such reaping here, an opportunity will be given for the operation hereafter. This is pure conjecture. Besides, it is not strictly accurate to allege that always "each reaps exactly as he has sown." This theory does not accord with the law of heredity and that of cause and effect. For instance, an individual may be sober, chaste, and honorable in the morning of his life, and yet subsequently be broken down physically and morally, and that not from his own fault, but in consequence of the wrong-doing of his parents prior to his birth. And yet those very parents themselves might never have experienced any serious effects through their own bad actions.

Charles Watts.

Lord Byron and the Lady.

For me I know nought; nothing I deny,
Admit, reject, contemn; and what know you,
Except, perhaps, that you were born to die!

An interesting letter by Lord Byron has recently been discovered. It has reference to the prayer of a lady on his behalf, and seems now to be published in order to show that the poet was not entirely devoid of religious belief. The prayer and the letter from Lord Byron appear in a religious journal, which grudgingly admits that some of Byron's poems are "no doubt exceptional in power and beauty." But, it adds, many of them "could only sadden the Christian reader"—which is probably the best recommendation to young people to read Lord Byron's poems, if they have not already done so.

Dean Howell, of St. David's, appears to have sent the letters to the press. The religious journal in which they are published is good enough to say that they "indicate in a startling way the right course of Christian action in intercourse with those who doubt or disbelieve." It seems that in 1819 the wife of a Mr. John Shepherd, of Frome, died and left amongst her papers a prayer which her husband believed to have been composed on behalf of the poet. The husband, with rather questionable taste, forwarded the prayer to Lord Byron. The terms of his letter to the poet are rather curious. The epistle is dated November 21, 1821, and is addressed from Frome, Somerset, to the Rt. Hon. Lord Byron, Pisa. The writer says: "More than two years since a lovely and beloved wife was taken from me by lingering disease after a very short union. She possessed unvarying gentleness and fortitude, and a piety so retiring as rarely to disclose itself in words." Then the writer goes on to say that, since the second anniversary of her decease, he had read some papers which no one had seen during her life, and which contained her most secret thoughts. Amongst them he found the prayer which, he says, "there is no doubt refers to your lordship"—though, from all it contains, it might have had reference to other distinguished men of the time. Here is a portion of the prayer:—

> "Oh, my God, I take encouragement from the assurance of Thy word, to pray to Thee on behalf of one for whom I have lately been much interested. May the person to whom I allude (and who is now, we fear, as much distinguished for his neglect of Thee as for the transcendent talents Thou hast bestowed on him) be awakened to a sense of his own danger, and led to seek that peace of mind in a proper sense of religion which he has found this world's enjoyments unable to procure. Do Thou grant that his future example may be productive of far more extensive benefit than his past conduct and writings have been of evil, and may the sun of righteousness, which, we trust, will at some future period arise on him, be bright in proportion to the darkness of those clouds which guilt has raised, and soothing in proportion to the keenness of that agony which the punishment of his vices has inflicted on him."

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The very officious husband, after inflicting the above and much more on Lord Byron, whom he takes upon himself to address, admits that there is nothing which, in a literary sense, could interest his lordship. There is something, however, in the concluding sentence of the prayer which no man, having the least regard for himself or for others, would have forwarded in the way described. Byron had many failings as well as surpassing abilities, but it does seem a little unfair to make a prayer to the Almighty the vehicle for condemning a man's real or supposed sins. Most people will agree that it was absolutely indecent to resurrect such a prayer from private papers and forward it to Lord Byron.

Byron, no doubt, felt like kicking the husband for his impertinence, but restrained himself from a regard for the lady. After all, it is something to be prayed for, especially by a young and beautiful woman, though the petitions are in all probability addressed to thin air.

With great gallantry, almost to the point of sacrificing principle, Lord Byron replied to Mr. Shepherd in regard to his wife's prayer. (It is worth while noticing that the Being to whom the prayer is addressed does not figure in the matter at all—scarcely as much as a lay figure in an artist's studio.) Byron says, naturally enough, that the extract affected him, because it would imply a want of all feeling to have read it with indifference. He says, as might have been expected, that he is not quite sure that it was intended for him. At the same time, he admits it might have been so intended. Byron was no hypocrite; no whited sepulchre. All his sins were on the surface. He was honest or compliant enough to accept the implications in the lady's prayer. He says:—

> "But, for whomsoever it was meant, I have read it with all the pleasure which can arise from so melancholy a topic. I say pleasure, because your brief and simple picture of the life and demeanor of the excellent person whom, I trust, you will again meet, cannot be contemplated without the admiration due to her virtues and her pure and unpretending piety.....A man's creed does not depend upon himself. Who can say, 'I will believe this, that, or the other,' and, least of all, that which he least can understand? I have, however, observed that those who have begun life with extreme faith have, in the end, greatly narrowed it, as Chillingworth, Clarke (who ended as an Arian), and some others."

Later in his letter, of which the above is only a summary, Lord Byron asks his correspondent to do him the justice to suppose that *video meliora proboque*, however the *Deteriora sequor* may have been applied to his conduct.

So much for the correspondence. The comments previously alluded to scarcely deserve attention. They seem to suggest that Byron was a Christian, whom—with all his recorded, perhaps exaggerated, faults—the Church is entitled to claim. But, of course, the author of "The Prayer of Nature" was no Christian. In his own words:—

> Let bigots rear a gloomy fane,
> Let superstition hail the pile,
> Let priests still spread their sable reign,
> With tales of mystic rites beguile.

But, in spite of all their charming, Byron never belonged to them. At school, at Harrow, he was accused of Atheism. Scepticism runs through nearly all his finest productions. He was never an Atheist as Shelley was. Sometimes he professed—mostly in a poetic fashion, and with poetic license—an approval of some theological ideas; but any expressions of that kind were nearly always corrected by an extra dose of Attic salt.

Leigh Hunt said of him: "He was a Christian by education; he was infidel by reading. He was a Christian by habit; he was no Christian upon reflection." That is a curious way of describing him, it is true; but if the description does not apply to him, it does to a considerable number of present-day folks.

Francis Neale.

Nature acts with fearful uniformity. Stern as fate, absolute as tyranny, remorseless as death, it has no ear for prayer, no heart for sympathy, no arm to save.—*G. J. Holyoake.*

Mr. G. W. Foote on Death.

Many people plodded through the wet streets to the Leicester Secular Hall last Sunday evening, to hear Mr. G. W. Foote, the President of the National Secular Society, on the theme of "Does Death End Us?" Tennyson, the lecturer observed, had described death as a "Shadow clothed in black, that holds the keys of all the creeds." All the religions of the world made promises with respect to the existence after death, but we must all die ere we could test the truth of these promises. Priests had always made use of men's fears. "Yet," declared Mr. Foote, "I deny that man has naturally any fear of death as such." The raw levies of the first French Republic, ill-fed and ill-clad as they were, hurled back the trained armies of the monarchs of Europe, and risked their lives with gay jests on their lips and the cry of liberty, equality, and fraternity as ther war-cry. What men feared was not death, but the means that led to it—typhoid fever, smallpox, wounds; in short, they feared suffering. We instinctively avoided pain until we were swayed by some stronger motive, such as duty, love, or friendship. To speak of the "death agony" was to utter a paradox. Pain is the recoil of the nerves against assault or disease. As the strength diminished the recoil diminished, and the dying retained little capacity for pain. What the dying needed was peace and quiet, with the sight of beloved faces and the sound of beloved voices. The priest entered the death-chamber and raised an agitation where nature raised none. Mr. Foote scathingly criticised the doctrines of Hell and the Resurrection, and, in passing, alluded to the subject of cremation. The late Bishop of Lincoln had objected to cremation on the ground that it would weaken the popular belief in the Resurrection. Mr. Foote then turned to the Spiritualists, and commented on their readiness to enter on discussion before they had verified the alleged phenomena of the spirit-world. He could not understand the part played by professional mediums. Surely, if a mother in the spirit-world desired to communicate with her son, she would do so personally and directly, without the intervention of a medium. What had evolution to say on the subject of death? Darwinism had made it clear that man was no special creation, that he was fundamentally and essentially an animal, conceived and developed pre-natally just like all other animals. Just as early man had risen from brutish progenitors, so the modern socialised and cosmopolitan man had evolved from early man without a break in the process. At no point could the emergence of "spirit" or "soul" be demonstrated. We might properly speak of the soul of a painter or an orator in the sense of his emotional character, but evolution had not produced any separate entity in the form of the soul. Mr. Foote affirmed that all the idealism and all the loveliness of life sprang from the fact of death. Just as the grandeur of a picture resulted from its admixture of light and shadow, so death lent enhancement to life. Which would a man love most, the things he could lose or the things he could not? Immortal being could never understand love and friendship as we do. Beings who cannot die can dispense with each other's assistance and affection. The holiest things of life grow from the recognition of the inevitableness of death. The doctrine of witchcraft had disappeared, and the beliefs in miracles and in an after-life were also dissolving like the icebergs which floated into warmer seas. The old theological ideas were disappearing before the light of science and the warmth of brotherhood. Science and brotherhood were the pillars of the great temple of humanity.

—*Midland Free Press, November 3, 1900.*

Obituary.

One of the links which bound the early days of our movement with the present was broken on November 4, when our old and esteemed member, Mr. John Gentle, died. He had been intimately connected with the Freethought movement in Glasgow for the last fifty years, during this time acting in various capacities on the committee of the Glasgow Secular Society. Mr. Gentle was known to all the leaders of Secularism, from Charles Southwell to Mr. Foote, and his steady loyalty to early convictions and sustained interest in their propagation are pleasant and refreshing to contemplate. He died at the age of seventy-two, and his funeral, despite the inclemency of the weather, was attended by a goodly number of his old co-workers and friends. Mr. Cohen, representing the National Secular Society, gave a short and impressive address of tribute and respect at the graveside. As one of the minor forces of our movement, the work and example of John Gentle take high place. Honest in his convictions and honorable in his actions, his life is an inspiration to those who take his place in the ranks. With him are buried a host of reminiscences of the early and struggling days of our movement.—T. Robertson, Glasgow.

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Acid Drops.

The Czarina of Russia is "as ladies love to be who love their lords." Naturally she desires a son and heir. To bring about this result, the Count Alexieff, Grand Master of the Ceremonies at the Russian court, has requested special prayers to be offered up during a period of nine days at the church of St. Leonard, near Limoges. This church is visited by large numbers of young married women, who pray to St. Leonard that they may be blessed with male offspring. No doubt it is very good business for the church. But what man in his right senses can believe for a moment that prayers have any influence on the phenomena of embryology? Still, if the Czarina does give birth to a boy, it will be held to redound to the credit of St. Leonard. If the baby happens to be a girl, that will prove nothing, except that St. Leonard was not in an accommodating humor.

We drew attention last week to the wholesale violation of Chinese women by the Christian troops of the Holy Czar of Russia. Since then we have noticed a fresh (if somewhat discreet) reference to the same subject in the *Daily News*. The Peking correspondent of that journal, writing under the date of September 20, states that the part of the city controlled by the Japanese was beginning to resume its old appearance; but in the Russian quarter not one shop in a hundred was open. "The only women to be seen," he says, "are old and wizened crones.....There are no young women to be seen from morning to night. I need not go into the reason for this, but it is a strong reason and an obvious one." The German quarter was in a similar condition. There also the shops were closed, the streets were as deserted, and "the women equally terrified." Such is the beastly brutality of the Christian soldiers who are there to teach the Chinese the superiority of the religion that was represented by the missionaries' well-armed avengers. One can only regret that the Chinese are not strong enough, at present, to drive these filthy Christians into the sea.

Last "Lord's Day" was temperance Sunday in the diocese of the Bishop of Rochester, and temperance sermons were preached in about two hundred churches and mission halls in South London and other districts. It is a pity that the Bishop did not distribute copies of Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer* amongst the clergy in the diocese. That little work would have enabled them to tell the truth about the relation of the Bible to what usually passes as Temperance, but is really Teetotalism. We fancy, however, that the clergy are not too fond of telling the truth on this subject. They quote a few passages against excessive drinking, and hide all the texts of a different character. They do not draw attention to the text that wine "cheereth God and man," neither do they dwell upon the fact that Jesus Christ manufactured a large quantity of wine in order to prolong a wedding feast.

Old Dowie has sent in a bill to the administrator of the extensive estate of the late Mrs. Mary Redding, of Mishawaka, Indiana. He claims 1,000 dollars for travelling ninety miles and baptising the deceased. It is reported, however, that Old Dowie's bill won't be paid voluntarily. No doubt his terms in future will be cash on delivery.

Parsons are often very exclusive. There is the Rev. C. A. Wells, for instance, rector of St. Peter's, Bedford. This gentleman has gravely rebuked two members of his congregation for assisting at a concert in a Wesleyan chapel. They were also members of the church choir, and he has "suspended" them for three months. Happily he is unable to "suspend" them in any other fashion—say from a rope's end.

Rev. W. H. Parr, of the Leytonstone Wesleyan Church, has been preaching a hot and strong sermon against theatres. He denies that any true Christian could think of visiting such places. We presume, however, that he has visited them himself, in order to know what he is talking about. A good many other ministers, apparently, go to theatres for the same object; though we cannot say that, when we have seen them there, they looked particularly distressed.

According to the Rev. W. H. Parr, the majority of stage managers are blackguards and panders. He doesn't use those very terms, but they sum up what he says. It would be interesting to hear the stage managers' opinion of their clerical censor. Some of them might tell him that his pious imagination has conjured up nine-tenths of the vice he denounces. They might also tell him that there is a lot of professional rivalry in his criticism.

Mr. Parr seems to entertain the idea that an actor who personates a wicked character has a tendency to become wicked himself. This shows that, while he may understand acting in the pulpit, he does not understand it on the stage. Whoever heard of the "heavy villain" being a scoundrel? He is generally the mildest of men off the boards. The actor who plays Macbeth doesn't murder kings; the actor who plays Hamlet doesn't kill his uncle; the actor who plays Othello doesn't smother his wife—he is more likely to be henpecked.

When a great French comedienne was in America a few years ago she was denounced from hundreds of pulpits. One man of God went to the last degree of anathema. Whereupon the witty Frenchwoman asked him whether he had ever heard of Christian charity. "Besides," she said, "why should we professionals be so jealous of each other?" Do you see, Mr. Parr?

Rev. H. K. Haslam, rector of Old, Northamptonshire, preached and printed a sermon on "The Fall of the Sparrows." Nearly one-fourth of it was taken word for word from a Spiritualist book called *I Awoke*, and other parts of the sermon were indebted to the same source. The reverend gentleman explains in *Light* that he got mixed. He says that he "cannot always remember what is the production of my own mind, and how much is derived from some other source." This difficulty in discriminating between *meum* and *tuum* sometimes leads to penal servitude.

The *Birmingham Catholic News* has found a new fault in Mr. H. Percy Ward, who is fighting for a seat as a "Secular Education" member on the local School Board. Mr. Ward is "beardless." Well, perhaps his Catholic censor is bald—maybe as bald as Elisha. Too little hair on the chin or the head is not, however, supposed to disqualify a man for public life. We are aware that Mr. Ward is young, but that is a fault which mends all too soon for most of us. Jesus Christ himself was dead and buried at thirty-three.

What does the *Birmingham Daily Mail* mean by saying that "Mr. Percy Ward *poses* as the representative of the Secularists"? Why "poses"? Surely the *Mail* is well aware that he has been *put forward* by the Secularists, and is supported by the only Secular organisation in the city, the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society. Really, it is the *Mail* that "poses."

The vicar of Alderholt, Hants, observes in his parish magazine, *apropos* of School Board contests, that every elector "has to make the sign of Christ's holy cross opposite the name of the person he votes for." Therefore, he adds, no Christian man should "allow himself to vote for any Jew, Atheist, anti-Churchman, or heretic." This is a suggestion quite worthy of the clerical intellect. Of course, the cross is not exclusively a Christian symbol, and is not specially holy. Christians are constantly referring to it as if crucifixion were some extraordinary form of punishment, instead of a very common penalty imposed in certain centuries. According to the Gospels, two persons were crucified in company with Christ. When Darius conquered Babylon, he put two hundred captives to death on the cross. When Alexander conquered Tyre, he put two thousand captives to death on the cross.

The *Christian World* publishes a letter from the late Dr. Godet, who has been called the *doyen* of continental Protestantism, in which he communicates what must be a very comforting assurance to Christians. He comments on the various views of the Atonement published in that journal, and observes that it does not appear to him that any of those who have joined in the task of elucidation have really succeeded. "The death of Christ, with its causes and consequences, continues beyond the reach of human explanations." He trusts that the contradictions which appear in these various explanations will have no ill effect on the faith of readers.

It is astonishing, observes the *Topical Times*, how some clerical gentlemen smell out wickedness. The Rev. Jacob Plimmer has been to Paris, and he has come back with stories that are making the hair of Presbyterian Scotland curl with interest. But how does he know all these things? the sceptics have asked. And Jacob has told them. "I had occasion to go below the surface a little." H'm!

The Reformed Presbyterians of the United States, otherwise the Covenanters, are in the unfortunate position that their consciences will not allow them to become citizens and voters. The constitution of the Union recognises the voice of the people as the supreme authority. The Covenanter considers that to be derogatory to the sovereignty of God. The laws made in pursuance thereof require the Post-office Department to do some work on the Sabbath, which he thinks also sinful. Such a Constitution he considers it anti-Christian to swear support to, and so, disfranchising himself, he remains a passive spectator. Some ten thousand men are thus politically paralysed by their consciences and strait-laced, narrow, Christian views.

W. Soltau writes from the Rue Faraday, Paris, to the *British Weekly* on Christianity and War. He refers to an article by Judge Bompas on that subject, in which two verses, Luke xxii. 36 and Matthew xxvi. 52, are quoted as being the only two passages in which can be found the direct

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teaching of Christ on the question, and the writer draws the conclusion that, "taken together, these passages seem to show that force is sometimes justifiable." But, argues W. Soltau, on examining Luke xxii. 36 with verse 38 also, "does it not rather seem that our Lord was speaking on that occasion to His disciples *in irony?* During His lifetime, He said, they acknowledged that they had lacked nothing; daily bread and protection He had found them. Now He was leaving them, and they must care for themselves, using purse and scrip, and taking care to have a sword ready. 'And they said, Lord, here are two swords.' Already they had been thinking of it and taking their measures. 'It is enough.' Well he knew their thoughts and their feeble faith. One of the two swords was shortly after used by Peter in his attempt at defence—and a blundering attempt it was. I would suggest that, thus read, this passage is completely in harmony with that in Matthew xxvi., and that in no instance do our Lord's words lead us to believe that the use of force is justifiable for His servants."

The Bishop of Ripon tells the following story: "Once a hot-tempered, somewhat grumbling vicar had occasion—or thought he had—to rebuke his curate for some mistake. The curate attempted to explain the matter, when the vicar cut him short by exclaiming, 'Look here, sir. Are you the vicar, or am I?' 'Well, I'm not,' said the curate. 'Then, if you're not the vicar,' said the enraged cleric very emphatically, 'why are you speaking like an idiot?'"

The *People*, under the editorship of Mr. Joseph Hatton, is exhibiting liberal tendencies. On several occasions of late it has been remarkably outspoken in its denunciations of Sabbatarianism. Last Sunday it had a leader-note on Puritan aggressiveness. In this instance it seems to have been especially affected itself by the attitude of certain religionists at Calne, in Wiltshire, who have endeavored to the best of their ability to persecute and intimidate one of the *People's* agents for selling that paper on Sunday. He was, it seems, a candidate for the Town Council, and was bitterly opposed by a number of the local religionists.

Amongst these was a Nonconformist minister, who, in the midst of his Sunday sermon, called upon his congregation not to vote for this particular candidate, because he sold newspapers on Sunday. The reverend gentleman was probably moved to this condemnation by a well-founded suspicion that the Sunday newspapers were infinitely more interesting, and more in public demand, than his Sunday sermons. But then, even this strict Sabbatarian does not preach on Sundays for nothing, any more than Sunday newspapers are published for nothing; and his sermons, in the opinion of a large number of the Calnites, are evidently much less needed.

The Parish Council of Saxilby, near Lincoln, are distressed over Sunday fishing—a bad form of wickedness anywhere, but especially sinful in the holy boundaries of Saxilby. The wonder is that the Almighty, being so much offended, should allow the fish to bite. But there seems to be some pretty good angling there. The Parish Council have petitioned the Great Central Railway Company against issuing cheap tickets for fishing matches on Sundays. The railway company will probably please themselves, and the Saxilby Council might as well devote themselves to highway and sanitary improvements.

At Liverpool the clergy are objecting to Sunday tramway traffic. As if, forsooth, people do not want to ride on Sundays as well as on other days. In the summer time traffic of this kind is especially to be approved. The clergy want to stop the trams in the hope that they can fill their churches. It is a vain hope, and their great solicitude for tramway employees—who are strong enough to take care of themselves, or at any rate do not require *their* assistance—is mere "bogey."

Apparently with surprise, newspapers have been announcing that a Church parochial gathering at Wycombe was recently held in a brewery. To those who have read the Bible, and believe in Christ's first reported miracle, and to those who have read Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer*, there is nothing incongruous in the circumstance of a Church meeting being held in such a place. Anyway, the Established Church generally has not been above accepting handsome gifts from those who carry brewing establishments on.

Is it not amusing to notice the awkward efforts of Bible-believers to "climb down"? In time we shall get to know how much—or, rather, how little—of God's Holy Word the pious really do believe in. Here is the Rev. Ambrose Shepherd, of Elgin-place, Glasgow, endeavoring, in a lecture on "The Use and Purposes of the Bible," to stave off criticism by withdrawal of claims. He says the Bible does not undertake to teach this, and it does not undertake to teach that, until one is rather curious to know what it does in reality propose to teach. But this throwing out of ballast, and the motive for it, is for the most part too obvious not to be perceived. Besides, the denials which we meet with nowadays in so many religious journals are absolutely dishonest. It is dishonest to pretend that the Bible does not undertake to teach, solemnly and seriously and literally, these very inconvenient things which are now repudiated. Of course, it has taught them—teaches them now; and men who have in the past been bold enough to deny them in print or by lecture have suffered atrociously at the hands of religionists in consequence.

Says this apologetic shepherd of the Lord's flock: "Let criticism do its best or its worst; the spiritual contents of the Bible are the gold that will suffer from no furnace that mortal man can heat." That is an absurd assertion. The historical portion, as he practically admits, has suffered, and why may not the spiritual, especially as they are so inextricably mixed?

The severe typhoon which struck Hong Kong is another Providential act which may be commended to the consideration of those who build their faith upon the Lord, and pray for his special interposition. Immense damage and loss of life occurred in this typhoon, owing to the sinking of native craft. So far as these casualties, at any rate, were concerned, the Lord seems to have remained in his usual listless condition.

The *Christian Advocate* presents its readers with a portrait of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. The photograph is spoken of as a triumph of art. There must be something wrong about that statement. The "triumph" fails to present him as quite an Adonis. There is, however, an air of distinction about Mr. Hughes. It is all explained in the note printed below the portrait: "Mr. W. J. Marshall, of Belfast, has supplied me with a clerical suit, and I can strongly recommend both the material and the workmanship.—H. Price Hughes."

A Roman Catholic periodical, entitled *The Poor Soul's Friend and St. Joseph's Monitor*, is published at Chudleigh, Devon. It has the high distinction of being "blessed by His Holiness Pope Leo XIII." It is "devoted to the interests of the Holy Souls in Purgatory," and "pleads most eloquently" the "cause of the 'Dear Ones Departed.'" A correspondent of *The Poor Soul's Friend*, P. Wynne, "calls attention to the consoling fact that one hundred days' indulgence can be gained for the souls in Purgatory each time we recite the short but beautiful prayer, 'My Jesus, mercy,' in their behalf." If this is too much, readers are reminded that the suffering souls relieved "certainly will not forget us when our time comes."

There is still prophecy in Israel; but nowadays it scarcely pays. An East London Jewess was last week fined £15 for telling fortunes by means of the Bible and key spell.

Canon Driver, D.D., recently delivered an address to a large audience of past and present students of New College, Oxford. He made some significant statements. For instance, he said: "The historical books of the Old Testament are seen to be no longer, as was once supposed, the works of Moses, Joshua, or Samuel, but are seen to present a multiplicity of phenomena which cannot be accounted for or reasonably explained except on the supposition that they came into existence gradually; that they are compiled out of the writings of distinct and independent authors characterised by different styles, and representing different points of view, which were combined together and otherwise adjusted until they finally assumed their present form. The differences between the documents thus brought to light are seen, further, to be such that, in many cases, they can no longer be held to be the work of contemporary writers, or to spring, as was once supposed, from a single generation."

Continuing in this strain, Canon Driver said: "Archæology supports criticism in pressing upon theologians and apologists the urgent need of a revision of current notions respecting parts of the Old Testament narratives. *Mutatis mutandis*, what has been said holds good of the poetical books. Their connection with the names with which they are traditionally associated must be almost uniformly abandoned; in some cases language, in others contents and character, imperatively demand this. The poetical books are seen now, in fact, to have much wider significance than they would have if they had been the work of David and Solomon alone."

The vicar of Denford was found drowned in a river near the vicarage, and an open verdict was returned. He went downstairs at two o'clock on Sunday morning to get a sandwich, and never returned. The former vicar of the parish met his death by drowning near the same spot.

A New Zealand cleric, the Rev. Dr. Elmslie, has been saying unpleasant things about "bookmakers." In accordance with the habit of his class, he has been unable to avoid exaggeration, and that has left him open to some cutting remarks from an English sporting journal. What is the good, that paper eventually inquires, of arguing with the average parson? "Accustomed to hold forth from his pulpit—'six feet above contradiction'—without interruption, he, on

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occasion, handles the truth with alarming freedom." In this case the average parson, represented by the Rev. Dr. Elmslie, does not appear to have confined himself to the truth.

An inquest was held at Portsmouth on the body of James Shepherd, aged 76, who committed suicide by cutting his throat with a penknife. Deceased was a naval pensioner, and a heavy drinker; but in an evil hour, apparently, he gave up distilled spirit for another kind of spirit which proved more pernicious. He developed a mania for reading the Bible. For fifteen hours a day he pored over the pages of that curious volume, until at last, as his daughter testified, he "became dazed." The jury found the usual verdict of temporary insanity. A more accurate verdict would have been, "Death from an overdose of Scripture."

A wicked and perfidious man, apparently, is the Rev. Dr. Dixon, of the Epiphany Baptist Church, in Boston, whose wife is suing him for divorce. It is in evidence that he made assignations with women in the study of his church, and he wrote love-letters to others. Some of his letters were full of the names of flowers, the significance of which has been made plain by the discovery of a key to the floral cipher. There was nothing too tender or warm for this clergyman to say to his female correspondents. Mrs. Dixon got material upon which to base her demand for a divorce by boring holes through doors and observing her husband's deplorable conduct. There is no doubt cast on the orthodoxy of the Rev. Dr. Dixon.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The same number of the *Truthseeker* from which the above paragraph was clipped contains several other instances of how some American men of God are never weary in well-doing. The Rev. L. S. Brown, of Liberty, New York, pastor of one of the largest Methodist churches in Sullivan county, committed suicide in the Central Hotel, Delhi, by taking laudanum. He was in financial trouble, and had been accused of forgery. The Rev. Henry M. Wharton, a well-known evangelist, is indicted for fraud. Amongst other appropriations, he had secured 13,000 dollars on property he held in trust for an Orphanage. The Rev. Rowland P. Hills, formerly of England, is in jail in Omaha for deserting his wife and committing bigamy. The Rev. S. S. Bandy, a colored Baptist preacher, was arrested for attempting to murder a fourteen-year-old girl. He was found dead in his cell, with his throat cut.

Mr. Augustus Hare, in his new book of Recollections, tells a good story of Carlyle. Some ecclesiastic asked him what would happen if Jesus Christ returned to earth now. "Happen?" said Carlyle; "why, Dickie Milnes would ask him to dinner, and ask Pontius Pilate to meet him." Dickie Milnes was afterwards better known as Lord Houghton. He was notorious for the catholicity of his taste for entertaining distinguished people.

Mr. Hare tells another good story of Cardinal Wiseman. This famous Catholic priest was invited to dine by some friends; it was Friday, but they had forgotten to provide a fast-day dinner. But the Cardinal was quite equal to the occasion. Stretching forth his hands in benediction over the table, he said, "I pronounce all this to be fish," and then proceeded to do justice to the good things before him.

When the great Dean Swift was conducting a morning service, and had come to the "Dearly-beloved brethren" part, he looked carefully round the church, and, seeing nobody there but himself and the clerk, he suited the words to the situation, and said: "Dearly-beloved brother, the Scripture moveth you and me in sundry places." It was not quite so bad as this the other Sunday evening in the parish church of Melpash, in Dorsetshire. Still, it was bad enough. The service lasted an hour and a half, and the vicar preached an elaborate sermon; but he had only five auditors, and four of them belonged to the choir. We presume the villagers were enjoying themselves in other establishments that deal in "spirits." However that may be, it is odd to see so many new churches being built while the old ones are emptying.

Miss Marie Corelli seems to have changed her opinion about the superiority of her own sex. A *Daily Mail* interviewer represents her as saying: "There can scarcely be again such a man as Shakespeare. Certainly, never a woman. The greatest woman who ever lived is only fit to grovel at Shakespeare's feet." It is said that an infuriated sheep is one of the most dangerous of animals. In the same way, we suppose, when the proud people *are* humble their humility is wonderful.

Dean Farrar and other clergymen preached some sermons on Shakespeare in the Collegiate Church of Stratford-on-Avon, and these discourses are to be published shortly under the editorship of the vicar, the Rev. George Arbuthnot. It will be our duty to deal with this volume when it is ready. We daresay, beforehand, that an effort is made to show that Shakespeare was a Christian, or at least a friend of religion.

Robert Dudfield, of Smethwick, who died recently at the age of fifty-four, weighed thirty-two stone. He was nine feet round the body, and three feet around the calf of each leg. Special apparatus was necessary to get the vast coffin out of the house, and a brewer's dray had to be utilised to convey it to the grave. Curiously, the deceased had been a drayman himself, so that his last ride was something like many he had taken before. It is to be hoped he will get up a good deal thinner on the resurrection morning.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has had to decline the *New York Journal's* application for an article or an interview. "My state of health," he says, "is such that I am able to do an extremely small amount of work. The task of bringing up to date such of my books as most need revision will probably never be achieved, and even the partial achievement will be made possible only by excluding the abstractions [? distractions]. Daily a large part of the little energy remaining to me is frittered away in correspondence, and I now find I must make the rule absolute against all letters save those of immediate personal concern."

What a lot of foolish busybodies there must be in the so-called civilised world when a great writer is pestered by so many gratuitous correspondents. Even in our own small way, we find such correspondence a terrible bane. Some people seem to think we have nothing to do but to read and answer their letters. Now and then quite impossible things are asked for "by return of post." We have even been requested to write essays for persons who have undertaken the task and find themselves incompetent. "Something that would take half an hour to read"—"It would not be difficult to you who are so well up in the subject." Probably the applicants haven't the slightest idea of how long it takes to write what cannot be read in less than thirty minutes. Nor do they reflect how wearisome it is to be eternally wielding the pen.

Secularism, says the Roman Catholic Bishop of Middlesborough, is the curse of the day. We reply that Roman Catholicism is the curse of the ages.

Samuel Froomkin, a master painter, and President of two synagogues, is bringing a libel action in a New York court against Harris Hyman, who reported that the plaintiff had been smoking on the Sabbath. Froomkin alleges that he lost his reputation as a pious Jew in consequence, and that his business fell off deplorably. A libel suit like this is calculated to promote the gaiety of nations.

According to the newspaper heading, it was "A Bad Boy's Suicide." The bad boy was Arthur Leopold Hobbs, a draper's porter, of Battersea. He had been imprisoned for theft, had then been sent to the Church Army Youth's Home, and had afterwards robbed his master of small sums. He committed suicide by shooting himself with a cheap pistol. "By the time you get this," he said in a letter to his mother, "I shall be in the next world with my Savior, Jesus Christ." If dying people speak the truth, as the proverb says, this "bad boy" is now in heaven—where, by the way, he is likely to find plenty of congenial society.

Artful Mary.

The Parson's Song.

(Tune: "Annie Laurie.")

Miss Mary's bairn is bonnie,
His only pa's a Jew;
For Mary's funny story
To me appears untrue—
To me appears untrue,
And ne'er believed can be,
Yet with bonnie Mary's story
I'll lie for £ s. d.

Her boy dislikes the sawdust,
And seeks to live as one
Who fancies that the parents
Should work, and sons do none—
Should work, and sons do none,
But damn and blast a tree;
Oh, with bonnie Mary's story
I'll lie for £ s. d.

This Jew is gone a-flying,
A rather airy feat,
For one so lately lying
A mass of loathsome meat—
A mass of loathsome meat,
For all the world, and me;
Oh, I'll boom this ancient story,
'Twill pay me £ s. d.!

G. L. Mackenzie.

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 18, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "The Riddle of the Universe."

To Correspondents.

Mr. Charles Watts's Engagements.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. P. Ball.—Thanks for your valued cuttings.

F. E. Willis.—Glad to hear the "saints" are fighting hard in the Birmingham School Board elections. Thanks for cuttings. Mr. Foote is in first-rate health.

W. H. Morrish.—Obliged. See paragraph. Thanks also for your good wishes.

C. Blyton.—Your admiration of Mr. Foote's presidential work is expressed in very flattering language. He hopes to deserve a tithe of your compliments. You can order Ingersoll's *Coming Civilisation* from our publishing office.

E. M. Hopes.—Your letter reaches us on November 13, twelve days after the elections took place. There must be a blunder somewhere.

A. Franklin.—Never mind the candidate's other opinions, if he is sound on Secular Education. That is the all-important point. We strongly advise our friends to support those School Board candidates, and those only, who are straight on *this* point. Everything else is really very subsidiary.

Vigilans.—We have our eye on the ex-felon.

Young Freethinker.—It was duly received, and is waiting for room.

G. J. Warren, 20 Rhodeswell-road, Limehouse, E., acknowledges with thanks the receipt of a parcel of clothing from Annie E. Embleton for distribution.

Secularist.—Thanks; but we would rather see the Report before referring to the matter. Can you send us a copy?

Two New Readers.—Shall be dealt with in our next. Thanks.

Old Freethinker.—Instead of giving you advice, we will apprise you of our own intention. We have a householder's vote in the Finsbury Division, and we shall plump for Mr. Barwick. Socialists are becoming more practical, and there is nothing in his program to frighten any progressive citizen. He is a staunch supporter of Secular Education, and that is enough for us. Any harm he *might* do—where you differ from him—sinks into insignificance beside the *good* he could do by promoting the cause of Secular Education on the London School Board.

Shilling Week.—T. M. G., 1s.; C. B. W., 1s.; Spencer Lloyd, 5s.

Mr. and Mrs. Pegg (Manchester) send us the £2 2s. they promised towards the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.—Horace Seal sends cheque in redemption of his promise of £25 to this Fund. He expresses the opinion that Freethought, while not financially or outwardly very successful in comparison with the Christian Churches, is nevertheless a powerful leavening influence in the religious world, and thus does a vast amount of indirect good. He suggests that we might pen an encouraging article from this point of view.

A. Haynes.—We prefer to answer your queries through the *Freethinker*. (1) Yes, Mr. Foote did debate some years ago with the Rev. H. B. Chapman. The discussion took place in the Secular Hall where you say you enjoyed hearing Mr. Foote last Sunday. (2) We do not know, and we do not care, whether the reverend gentleman "claims to have come out victorious." (3) The debate was not published.

R. E. Owen.—The late Sargeant Cox wrote a captial book on Public Speaking—probably the best extant on that subject. There is an American book, by William Matthews, entitled *Oratory and Orators*. An English edition was published by Hamilton, Adams, & Co., in 1879, but we believe it is out of print now. This work can also be highly recommended. Mr. G. J. Holyoake's *Public Speaking and Debate* is vivacious and suggestive.

Received.—Truthseeker (New York)—Glasgow Herald—Freidenker—North-Eastern Daily Gazette—Blue Grass Blade—The Crescent—Torch of Reason—Nottingham Express—Stratford Express—Birmingham Catholic News—Two Worlds—Light—Public Opinion (New York).

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

Lecture Notices must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Scale of Advertisements:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote lectures this evening at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road. His subject will be "The Riddle of the Universe"—*apropos* of Haeckel's recently published book bearing that title. Freethinkers should give publicity to this lecture amongst their liberal-minded friends and acquaintances. They might even try to tempt Christians to attend on this occasion.

Mr. Foote had a good audience at Camberwell on Sunday evening, though not quite as good as he has been accustomed to there. We understand that the advertising which used to be done has been discontinued. For our part, we think this is a mistake. People cannot come to a meeting if they do not know of it. If a large hall is to be filled there must be adequate publicity, and in the long run it pays for itself, and something more. We can call to mind several Branches that dropped advertising at one time or another, but they all had to recur to it. Of course we are not saying this by way of complaint, but by way of suggestion.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured in the Athenæum Hall. The audience was a good one, but not so large as usual. Mr. Watts's description of the nature of Jehovah caused much laughter, and the delineation given of his character and death called forth hearty applause. Mr. Jones, of Hyde Park notoriety, offered some opposition, but his speech consisted of the again-and-again-repeated statement that the lecture was too comical for any serious reply to be given to it. He confessed that he was unable to answer Mr. Watts—an avowal which the audience appeared to readily believe.

On Monday last Mr. Charles Watts commenced the course of week-night lectures which has been arranged for London, under the new scheme, in the Wellington Hall, Islington. Unfortunately, the wet night interfered with the audience, but those present marked their appreciation of the lecture by frequent applause. An interesting discussion followed, which the audience evidently enjoyed. Mr. C. H. Cattell presided, and Miss Vance was, as usual, well to the front attending to the literature.

The next free lecture at Wellington Hall, Islington, will be delivered on Monday evening, November 26. November 19 was pre-engaged. The other Mondays will run consecutively. Mr. Cohen is to lecture on November 26, taking for his subject, "Missions to the Heathen." Mr. Foote follows on December 3, and Mr. A. B. Moss on December 10. North London Freethinkers are invited to distribute handbills of this course of lectures. Application for them should be made at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C.

We have already announced that, after much difficulty, a hall has been engaged for a series of four Sunday evening lectures in East London. This is under the Concentration Scheme in connection with the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. The hall is at the Aldgate Public Baths, in Goulston-street, near the Aldgate-street Metropolitan Station. It is a large place, with chairs for five hundred people, and standing-room for a good many more. The admission will be free, and a collection will be taken to help defray the expenses. Mr. C. Cohen leads off this evening (Nov. 18) with a lecture on "The Use of Religion." He will be followed by Mr. C. Watts. Mr. Foote will give up a night at the Athenæum Hall in order to include himself in this course. The last lecturer will be Mr. W. Heaford.

East London friends are earnestly invited to do their utmost to get the large hall of the Aldgate Public Baths well filled on each occasion. It ought not to be difficult to do so. There are plenty of potential auditors in East London if they are only apprised of the lectures. We may add that opportunity will be given for questions and discussion.

Sunday evening lectures would do good at Clapham, Brixton, Battersea, or Croydon. We should be much obliged if friends in those districts would try to learn particulars of suitable and available halls, and forward us the information, or send it to Miss Vance, the N. S. S. Secretary. The sooner, of course, the better. We want to get to work immediately.

Application was made for the use of the large hall of the Paddington Public Baths for three evenings, under the Concentration Scheme. Subjects were submitted as desired, and the answer came that the Committee would let the hall for *one* evening. Probably they want to see who we are, and what we are like; and, if nothing happens to the building, then or soon afterwards, they will let it to us again. The matter is not absolutely decided, so we cannot make a more definite announcement; except that, if only one evening can be secured at the outset, Mr. Foote has resolved to take it himself in the circumstances. It will be rather a tax upon him, but the reason will no doubt be obvious, and an occasional martyrdom is one of the perquisites of the presidency.

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The Annual General Meeting of the Secular Society, Limited, will be held at the Manchester Hotel, near the Aldersgate-street Metropolitan Station, on Friday evening, November 30. Members are requested to make a note of the date. They will receive legal notice of the meeting in due course, together with proxy forms, which should be filled in (if at all) and returned to the Secretary, at the Society's registered office, at least two days beforehand. It should be borne in mind that every proxy form, to be valid, must bear a penny stamp—a place for which is indicated; and that the member's signature must be written over the stamp. The signature also requires a witness.

Mr. Percy Ward has done a good thing by printing on one of his election bills some striking extracts from old speeches of Mr. Chamberlain, the late Mr. George Dawson, and the late Dr. R. W. Dale, in favor of Secular Education. "Support the old Birmingham policy" and "Plump for Ward." Such is the moral of the handbill.

There is to be another debate on Spiritualism—this time between Mr. H. Percy Ward and Mr. Ernest Marklew. It is to take place on Monday and Tuesday, November 26 and 27, in the Music Hall, Surrey-street, Sheffield.

Mr. H. C. Phillips, 160 Mile End-road, E., honorary secretary to Mr. George Hewitt's School Board Election Committee, wishes to appeal through our columns for financial and other assistance. Mr. Hewitt is the Social Democratic Labor candidate in the Tower Hamlets Division. He is straight on the question of Secular Education.

Canon Nolloth having contributed a long letter to the *Beverley Guardian* on "Sunday Observance," Mr. G. Dawson Baker follows with an admirable reply from the Secular standpoint. It is to be wished that Freethinkers who are able to write letters to the local press would do so whenever the opportunity arises.

Letters have appeared in the *Glasgow Herald* on "The Bible and the Higher Criticism." The notorious Harry Long is in the correspondence, of course; on the other hand, there is an excellent and pointed letter by "W. D. M." on the Freethought side. It will be widely read in such a journal.

Socialists and God.

Lest there should be any misunderstanding as to the spirit in which these remarks are made, it may be as well to say at the start that I am a Socialist; that is to say, I believe the ideal of those who strive for social solidarity, for a community which shall be a social whole, to be higher and better than the ideal of those who regard the community as nothing more than a heterogeneous crowd of struggling units, fighting and oppressing one another, in which the "fittest," who "survive," frequently do so by reason of the possession of some of the ugliest and least attractive qualities in human nature. And when we find, as we do find, at the present day, that it is the Socialists, and practically they only, who raise any serious and sustained protest against militarist waste; when we find the middle-class and Liberal politicians either frankly joining the Socialists or gravitating into the openly reactionary camp; and when we find arrayed on the one side all privilege, vested interest, militarism, clericalism, and brainless indifference, and on the other intelligence, self-sacrifice, civic interest and alertness, and a desire to realise a higher national life, it does not really seem very difficult to choose our path. For these reasons the present writer was certainly gratified at such successes as the Socialist party generally gained in the recent elections. There is, of course, much that may be criticised in the Socialist parties in England—they would not be human if they were immaculate; though, whilst in one breath the enemies of Socialism denounce it as a doctrine of rank plunder and public immorality, in the next they declare that Socialism is too visionary and lofty an ideal for mere men.

But one of the weak spots in Socialism in England—a weakness not to be found in the Socialist parties of the Continent, which are almost all undisguisedly Freethinking and Atheistic—is the tendency to toy with religion, or, at the best, to play a non-sectarian game. Instead of recognising that theology must be treated, not merely with indifference, still less with friendship, but with open and determined hostility, if there is to be any permanence in social reform, there is too much namby-pamby diluted theology about many of the British Socialist leaders. One hears too much of the nonsense about Christ being the first Socialist, and all the rest of it, from some guides of the proletariate. This phase of the Socialist movement may be said to reach its most significant expression in the *Clarion* and its editor "Nunquam," who, despite his popular success as a pamphleteer, remains a mere unreliable sentimentalist with no consistent scientific policy, and who, in the gloomy mood of this week, will sadly proceed to traverse everything which the optimist mood of last week laid down as law. It is one of the reflections on the general level of English culture at the present day—a subject which recent events have driven many detached observers to more or less critically examine—that there is scarcely a country in Europe, certainly not France or Germany, where so ill-equipped and unstable a mind as Nunquam's could attain such eminence as a Socialist leader.

But the recent election of Mr. Keir Hardie for Merthyr has furnished some further examples of the kind of thing against which the intellect of Socialism must simply set its face if the cause is to be successfully piloted. *Justice*, an organ which, one may observe, is much more thorough and scientific, and much less goody-goody, than any of the other Socialist papers, contained the other day the text of the election address which Mr. Keir Hardie issued at Merthyr; and it must be said the perusal of this document does not encourage very high hopes in so far as that quarter is concerned.

In the first place, the personal note struck is anything but modest. I suppose no one would look for modesty in an election address, but the spectacle of a man puffing himself and his own actions and services, rather than setting forward his principles, is not pleasant. But the religious references are what most excite our interest. Here, for instance, is one extract:—

> "My programme is the programme of Labor. My cause is Labor's cause—the cause of humanity—the cause of God."

Now that last tag is redolent of all the worst cant that afflicts society. In London and elsewhere during the election various Tory candidates put out posters and leaflets running: "Vote for So-and-So, for Queen, and for God." But the device might have been left with the Tories. Apart from the want of dignity it evidences, its very ridiculousness might have checked its use by a democratic candidate. If Mr. Keir Hardie's cause was the "cause of God," what was his opponent's cause? The Devil's? And how does Mr. Hardie know his cause is God's cause? Has he a special telephone? In any case, we are left with the reflection that God handles his cause very badly when it has to depend on the chance of a contested election. If Jehovah is going to start electioneering, he will really require to take lessons from Birmingham, for if Mr. Hardie and his friends were God's candidates, as it were, Joe has left Jehovah a long way behind. As a matter of fact, indeed, "God's cause," through Mr. Hardie himself, suffered a defeat at Preston, to say nothing of elsewhere. Doesn't Mr. Hardie think his God might have done just a little more for his own side? There is no record even that he subscribed a penny to Mr. Hardie's election fund. The sober fact is that Mr. Hardie, if he used this phrase about God sincerely, has a vast deal to learn before he can be regarded as an efficient servant of the cause of social sanity; whilst, if he used it insincerely, which personally I do not for a moment believe, the case would be about as hopeless as could well be imagined.

Further on, however, in the same election address there occurs this passage:—

> "I am a Democrat in politics, and a Socialist in economics. I first learned my Socialism in the New Testament, where I still find my chief inspiration."

This is the kind of thing that brings Socialism into disrepute, and simply plays the game of its enemies. Really the preposterousness of this talk about the Socialism of the New Testament is too ridiculous for discussion. Where in the New Testament does Mr. Hardie find his Socialism? Is it in the haphazard collection of moral and immoral platitudes and mysticisms alleged to have been uttered by a mythical Jesus? Is it in the inculcation of poverty, the depreciation of steady industry, the injunction to love one's enemies?

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If so, why did Mr. Hardie contest the seat against his opponent? Does he love, say, Mr. Chamberlain, whom he denounces, in so many terms, as a corrupt liar? It would be futile to seriously pursue a criticism of Mr. Hardie's attitude; but that attitude is the index of a good deal of shallowness and ignorance, which has to be countered amongst scientific and thoughtful Socialists, if Socialism is not to perish.

For Socialism must make headway in so far as it stands for an honest and clear-headed survey of politics, a moral progress to a more stable civilisation, a scientific reconstruction of society which shall evolve order out of the chaos which reigns to-day. Socialism, if it is to have permanent value, must, in fact, mean the application of intelligence to the problem of human society. For those who would forward it by clap-trap and an appeal to mob-superstition there can only be failure. Howsoever else it may come, progress cannot come *that* way.

Frederick Ryan.

Freethought in Switzerland.

One of the chief figures amongst the many striking personalities assembled at the recent International Freethought Congress at Paris was Monsieur Charles Fulpius. He is a tall, dark, severe-looking man, of modest, unassuming character, but withal a learned man—an earnest stalwart for Freethought; one who impresses you with the weight and dignity of the old classic Roman, whose type of feature seems to have lineally descended to the resuscitator of Swiss Freethought, who inaugurated in 1890 the Geneva Freethought Society, of which he is president, and founded this year *Lumière* ("Light"), the organ of the movement in Switzerland. M. Fulpius has set himself the task of awakening the dead indifference of his compatriots to the great struggle between science and religion, and seems to have received the inspiration of his journalistic labors chiefly from witnessing the enthusiasm with which the French and Belgian Freethinkers were preparing themselves for the tasks imposed by the program of the recent Congress. The new paper appears monthly, and is practically a revival of the work carried on by the *Rationalist*, published at Geneva from 1861 to 1870, under the direction of Martin Bouchey, Baron Miron of Ponnat, Populus Leo, and other brave spirits who fought under the flag of Freethought, in order to redeem the sturdy mountaineers from a worse than Austrian tyranny—the tyranny of their own superstition.

A remarkable institution of Genevan Freethought is the Feast of the Tree of Science. It takes place every year at the winter solstice, answering to our Christmas; and, encouraged by the great success of the function in 1899, the Society has already appointed a Committee in order to render the approaching solemnity as instructive as possible to the young people, for whose special benefit the Feast has been instituted. Every endeavor is made to attach the sympathy of the rising generation to Freethought by judicious appeals to their emotions and their reason. The festal occasion is made one of rational instruction and rejoicing for the children at a season when superstition specially appeals to the gastronomic sense of its votaries, and builds fresh altars on the stomachs of the faithful. The feast equally serves as a means of bringing together whole families of Freethinkers at a period of universal holiday, and so consecrating the occasion to the strengthening of their faith in humanity by mutual encouragement and friendly congratulations, as also by the remembrance brought vividly before their eyes, by the addresses and commemorations made at the function in question, of the benefits which science bestows upon the race.

The point next to be noted may be useful as information for those plutocratic Freethinkers whose leisure and means may enable them in the future to visit Geneva. The city being much frequented by strangers, the Society there now issues cards of temporary membership for the benefit of foreigners staying for a time at Geneva, whereby, on paying a subscription of fifty centimes per month (fivepence), they are enabled to attend the meetings of the Society and to enjoy the advantages of its library. The hall in which the meetings are held is at No. 34 Rue du Marché, and the joint address of the President and Secretary of the Society, and office of *Lumière*, is No. 47 Boulevard du Pont d'Arve; and, judging from the subjects treated, and by an able and instructive address by M. Fulpius on "The Origin of Man," now published in pamphlet form, which I have had the pleasure of reading, the meetings are fully worthy of the support of foreign Freethinkers who are able to understand French.

A word on the Statutes, or Rules, of the Genevan Freethought Society may here be interesting, by way of comparison with our own aims and objects. The declared aim of the Society is fourfold:—

(*a*) To augment the scientific knowledge of its members. With that end in view lectures on Evolution, the Origin of Man, historical addresses connected with the martyrdom of Servetus, and the labors of other Freethinkers in the past, have quite recently been delivered to large audiences under the auspices of the Society.

(*b*) To help forward the emancipation of thought, and the struggle against prejudice and superstition.

(*c*) To establish the closest relations between all those who desire that everybody should enjoy liberty of thinking in accordance with their reason, rather than have their thought subjected to faith and credulity.

(*d*) To follow the search after truth and the love of goodness, taking science and progress as bases of our endeavor.

The mutual obligations and rights of the members are expressed as under:—

1. Each member undertakes a moral engagement towards the Society, to avoid as far as possible all participation in the ceremonies and practices of religion.

2. The members engage themselves to lend mutual counsel and protection to each other to the utmost of their power.

3. In the event of a purely civil marriage of one of its members being contemplated, the Society will take care, subject to the consent of the happy couple, to send a representative to take part in the legal ceremony.

4. Members are invited not to allow their children to be baptised, and in that event the Society undertakes to organise a secular ceremony in substitution for the so-called sacred one.

5. Members desiring a purely secular funeral may make a declaration in duplicate, on a document duly stamped and attested by four witnesses, two of whom should be the President and some other member of the Society. The four witnesses have to sign the declaration as well as the member making the same. One copy is kept by the President in the archives of the Society, and the other remains in the custody of the member. When these conditions are complied with, the Society undertakes to see that the wishes of the deceased are respected, and engages, if necessary, to meet the expenses of the funeral.

Rules of this kind may, to some people, perhaps, seem somewhat rigid and sectarian; but they certainly serve to cement the members together by the ties of solidarity, and tend to prevent that leakage which indifference (another word too often for incohesion) occasions. The above provisions, coupled with various secular ceremonies (such as the Feast of the Tree of Science above noted), are found in the rules of several other Continental Freethought Societies; and these rules—especially those of the Spanish Freethinkers—are so important that I propose to devote a special article to a consideration of the subject.

Many English Freethinkers will, I hope, give themselves the pleasure of seeing Geneva and meeting M. Fulpius and other Swiss Freethinkers in 1902, when the next International Freethought Congress meets, in accordance with the determination of the Paris Congress, at the beautiful city where Calvin once ruled as a tiger and buried his fangs deep in the flesh of Servetus. The Swiss Freethinkers are preparing a cordial reception for all the friends of mental liberty, and are justly proud of the honor conferred upon them by the recent Congress; and we may all rest assured, from what we know of M. Fulpius, his cordiality of character and his zeal for Freethought, and the well-known hospitality of the Swiss character, that the welcome extended to the Freethought delegates to be sent to Geneva in 1902 will be worthy of the noble cause which did not die when Servetus was murdered, which Rousseau adorned with his illustrious pen, and whose temple is built, not, like Christianity, on blood and fire, but on the solid foundations of liberty and progress.

William Heaford.

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Christian Lies About Shelley.

"To what damned deeds religion urges men."
—Lucretius.

Shelley died so long since that he seems to belong to a wholly different era from our own. Even to a man born so early in the century as Browning, it seemed a wonder to have met a person who had seen him. "And did you once see Shelley?" he asked.

Shelley—born when the French Revolution was already in full career—was but twenty-four years old in the year of "bloody Waterloo." Unlike most of the other great writers of the time—Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, for instance—Shelley was far enough removed from the Revolution to escape its most violent distractions, while he was close enough to the great movement to fall within the range of its dominating suggestion. It was possible for Shelley to forget the horrors and forgive the disappointments, and to ascribe to the correct causes the partial failures of such bright promises.

The extraordinary effect exercised by the Revolution is now one of the commonplaces of history. The fact does not obtrude itself; but Shelley really belongs to an order of writers of which the type is French rather than English, and of which Rousseau is the greatest representative. Rousseau and Shelley wrote, not merely for artistic, but for propagandist ends—to impress their ideas upon others by the force of eloquence. In the last analysis they are alike in mental type and in the objects aimed at. Shelley did not originate the philosophy in his poetry; he merely adopted it, borrowing indirectly from Godwin and directly from the great French Freethinkers of the eighteenth century. But the ideas had all the force of novelty. Rousseau and Shelley merely carried on a great tradition; but to the priest-ridden people they addressed, the views propounded were in truth a new evangel.

Nothing is more remarkable in the France of that time than the weakness of the opposition to the revolutionary ideas. The comparative impotence of the Great Lying Christian Church was very significant. In spite of some slight differences between Voltaire and Rousseau, the Freethinkers had it very nearly all their own way. Their teaching passed all social barriers—found its way among all classes. The twin despotisms of the Monarchy and the Great Lying Church had been pressed too far. The whole country, with one unchecked impulse, rose and acclaimed the apostles of Liberty.

England, on the other hand, presented a complete contrast. The ideas which became so popular in France only served in England to bring out the very worst side of the Great Lying Christian Church. The years succeeding the introduction of the revolutionary ideas in this country were mainly characterised by a blind and unreasoning intolerance. Freethinkers and Radicals were imprisoned, transported, and fined. The Freethought evangel found its finest expression in Shelley's writings. A poet in the first instance, enthusiastic, ardent, and filled with the love of humanity, he imagined all mankind to be on his own level. He dreamed of a coming golden age, and common men and women were awed and inspired by his magnificent and wonderful vision—that to have seen its splendors for a moment was privilege enough.

At the end of the nineteenth century we find that Shelley emerges as the supreme figure among his contemporaries, destined to immortality of fame. Many of his rivals, who overshadowed him whilst he was living, have almost faded into mere names. But the Atheist poet has a message for generations yet unborn. Christian writers are loth to admit Shelley's Freethought. Being religious themselves, they pretend that a man of genius cannot be an Atheist, and so they tell lies, and strain their faculties to disprove what Shelley asserted all through his life.

Orthodox writers are always finding opportunities of imposing upon the ignorance and credulity of ordinary readers. In the case of Shelley their impudence is simply brazen. Professor Henry Morley, whose pen was at work in the interests of the Great Lying Christian Church for so many years, is a typical sinner in this respect. In his introduction to the popular edition of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* he is simply unpardonable. This is the way the Christian Professor defames the dead Atheist:—

> "Shelley, driven by wrongs of the world that falsely claimed alliance with the love of God, had wildly cast aside faith in the God whose name he had so often heard taken in vain. He had cast away the soiled shell, believing it to be the substance, and, denying God in the letter while he drew near to him in the spirit, he closed his *Prometheus* with expressions of the living soul of Christianity. He found Truth, but he did not know her by her name. The over-sensibility of a mind not wholly sound led him to give up the guidance of his life to passing, half-insane emotions, leading him into actions that no healthy judgment can call good. But the refuge he seeks from the wrongs of life is—though he does not know it—at the feet of Christ. The true Christian hears, through the wildest music in the utterance of *Prometheus Unbound*, the cry to which his own soul answers with sure hope, and claims fellowship with the singer who presses, like the lark, up to the height of heaven, though his way is through the darkness of a cloud."

Shelley's Atheism, be it remembered, was never disputed during his unpopular days, when men suffered imprisonment for selling his *Queen Mab*. But when it was discerned that the star of a great poet had arisen, he was falsely and impudently dubbed a Christian. Professor Morley is not alone in this crusade of robbery and insult. Mr. Edmund Gosse—a minor poet and critic—in his stupid address at the farcical Shelley celebration at Horsham, since reprinted, said:—

> "Those to whom the restraints of religion were hateful marshalled themselves under the banner of the youth who had rashly styled himself an Atheist, forgetful of the fact that all his best writings attest that, whatever name he might call himself, he, more than any other poet of the age, saw God in everything."

These two pious writers ought to have been ashamed to have penned such untruthful nonsense. To defy truth and common sense in such a manner is sufficient to make a bronze statue blush.

But the Great Lying Christian Church will never hesitate to claim Shelley as one of her "lambs." She buried the corpse of the great infidel Darwin in Westminster Abbey. She interred the remains of doubting Thomas Huxley "in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection." She smuggled the dead body of Sir Richard Burton into the church. She laid hold of Prince Jerome Napoleon *in articulo mortis*. She will never rebuke her pious followers for a little "lying for the glory of God, world without end, amen."

Mimnermus.

"Jephthah's Daughter."

Gideon was succeeded by Abimelech, who put his seventy brothers to death; and he was followed by Tola, who ruled for twenty-three years, and added thirty male children, and God knows how many female children, to the population. When Tola died the Jews indulged in a perfect carnival of idolatry. They worshipped the gods of all their neighbors with the utmost impartiality, which so provoked the Lord that he let the Philistines and the Ammonites oppress them until they repented, when he raised them up a deliverer in Jephthah the Gileadite. This worthy was the son of a harlot, and, being driven from his father's house by the legitimate children, he had taken to the life of a freebooter. But he was elected chief by the elders of Gilead when they resolved on war with Ammon. Before going out to battle, "the spirit of the Lord" being upon him, he vowed that if he returned victorious he would offer whomsoever came out of his own house to meet him as a burnt offering. The Ammonites were smitten with immense slaughter, and Jephthah returned to Mizpeh, where his daughter, who was ignorant of his vow, came out to meet him with dance and song. The pious father was very sorry, for "she was his only child"; but he kept his promise to God, and, after allowing the unfortunate girl two months to bewail her virginity, he "did with her according to his vow."

Ordinary Christians shrink from the literal horror of this story, and welcome every attempt of modern commentators to explain it by the subterfuges of a later faith. But a slight acquaintance with ancient creeds

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would diminish their surprise. Human sacrifice is almost invariably found in certain stages of religious culture. No matter where we turn—to Phœnicia, Carthage, Assyria, Arabia, Gaul, Rome, Greece, India, Mexico, or Peru—this dark and bloody rite has prevailed; and it has been found in recent times among various African tribes, in the South Pacific Islands, and among the Mongols and the American Indians. All the great Semitic gods, from Moloch downwards, were ravenous for human victims, and there is nothing overstrained in the terrific thirteenth chapter of Flaubert's *Salammbô*. Nor was the God of Israel an exception to the rule. "There is, indeed," says Professor Soury, "no doubt that human victims were offered to Jahveh" in primitive times. Like Moloch, Jahveh claims his first-born. "The first born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me," he says, "for all the first born are mine." And Jephthah's fulfilment of his vow was in accord with the text in Leviticus (xxvii. 28-29), which declares that both beast and man devoted to the Lord shall not be redeemed, but "shall surely be put to death."

Not until the twelfth century of our era, when Rabbi Kimchi wrote on the subject, was there any attempt to dispute the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter. Josephus distinctly says "he sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering." St. Ambrose deplores Jephthah's cruelty; St. Jerome says that God permitted the sacrifice to punish the imprudent father for such a rash vow; St. Chrysostom expresses a similar opinion, which was also adopted by Justin Martyr and Theodoret; and the great St. Thomas, while censuring Jephthah's rashness, acknowledges that the faith and devotion which inclined him to make this vow proceeded from God.

Rabbi Kimchi proposed to read, "it shall be consecrated to the Lord if it be not fit for a burnt offering," or "it shall be offered for a burnt offering, if fit for it." Simon Patrick followed this line, but confessed that the stream of interpreters ran in the contrary way. Adam Clarke takes the same position, but he supports it with *à priori* reasons of no weight against the text, which, as Luther says in his marginal note, "stands there clear." Our Authorised Version shows "a distinct disposition to tone down the meaning of the original," says the Rev. Dr. Wright, who alleges that the Hebrew "*whosoever* goeth out from the doors of my house" expressly refers to a person, and not to an animal. This agrees with Calmet, who says: "Observe, he does not say the first *thing*, or the first *animal*, but the first *person*." This great Catholic commentator adds that "I will offer him up as a burnt offering to the Lord, *eum holocaustum offeram Domino*," is the true meaning of the text, and they pervert it who say she was redeemed. Exactly the same view is expressed in the latest English commentary, edited by Canon Cook. The original Hebrew, we are told, means *whosoever*, and "these words prove conclusively that Jephthah intended his vow to apply to human beings, not animals"; the same writer adding, still more strongly, that the words "preclude any other meaning than that Jephthah contemplated a human sacrifice."

The words "and she knew no man," which end the story of Jephthah's vow, have induced some apologists to pretend that his daughter was not burnt, but devoted to perpetual virginity. The words, however, stand in our Revised Version "and she had not known man"; that is, says the Speaker's Commentary, "in the mind of the writer her virginity was an aggravation of her cruel fate." Besides, as Milman observes, "it is certain that vows of celibacy were totally unknown among the Hebrews, and belong to a different stage of society. Another objection of Michaelis is fatal to these views. The daughter could not be consecrated to the service of the high priest, for the high priest and the ark were then at Shiloh, in the territory of Ephraim, with whom Jephthah was at deadly war." Well might Bishop Warburton exclaim: "Solutions like these expose sacred scripture to the scorn and derision of unbelievers."

There cannot be a reasonable doubt that Jephthah's daughter was sacrificed as a burnt offering to the Lord. But the question remains, Did the Lord accept the present and sanction the sacrifice? First, let it be noted that "the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah" *before* he made his fatal vow; nor is there any sign that the holy spirit deserted him before its completion. Next, there is absolutely no censure of Jephthah's conduct in any part of the Bible. Lastly, he is mentioned by Paul as a worker of righteousness through faith. Jephthah's vow did not, therefore, displease the Lord, who continued to speak through prophets and apostles for more than a thousand years without expressing the slightest disapprobation; and even when he distinctly praised Jephthah through the inspired pen of St. Paul, he neglected to mix any censure with his panegyric.

Jephthah's vow was not without a parallel among pagan nations. Agamemnon, who led the Greeks in the war against Troy, immolated his daughter Iphigenia to appease the gods, and procure favorable winds for the fleet which was detained at Aulis. According to the Greek legend, Iphigenia's innocence excited the compassion of Diana, on whose altar she was to be sacrificed; and when the knife was descending into her devoted bosom the goddess miraculously snatched her away, and substituted a handsome goat for the maiden. This escape, however, is probably later than the original story of her immolation. Like the modern theories of the escape of Jephthah's daughter, it was the product of an age which had grown ashamed of the brutalities of primitive faith, and learnt to substitute animals for human victims on the altars of the gods.

—*From "Bible Heroes," by* G. W. Foote.

Correspondence.

SECULARISM AND MARRIAGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Your leader on "The Morals of the Primitive Christians" prompts me to ask you kindly to explain clearly an "object" of the Secular Society, as set forth in your issue of last week. It runs thus, and appears to me rather vague: "To promote the recognition by the State of marriage as a purely civil contract, leaving its religious sanctions to the judgment and determination of individual citizens."

Be good enough to say whether the Secular Society would wish a man and woman to be authorised to engage to live together as husband and wife for a limited period, such as a month or six months, if such a "civil contract" recommended itself to the "judgment and determination" of the parties concerned? Or, under the same circumstances, would it permit a man to have more wives than one, or a woman to have more husbands than one? If not, why not?

As I write for information, and have no wish to enter on a matrimonial controversy, I hope you will be good enough (as before) to insert this short letter, and reply to my inquiries.

(Rev.) Henry J. Alcock, M.A.

[We find it difficult to believe that Mr. Alcock can be quite as honestly stupid as he appears to be on the face of his letter. Clearly, to any man of plain common sense, the "judgment" and "determination" apply to the "religious sanctions" of marriage—not to marriage itself. In other words, the State in England should do as it does in France and other countries; make *civil* marriage compulsory, and let married couples add the *religious* ceremony, or omit it, just as they please. Whether men and women are married in the sight of God is a matter between themselves and God—or the Church, if they choose. All the State is concerned with is whether they are married in the sight of society. The Secular Society is not called upon to discuss any other question relating to the marriage institution. It merely stands by the distinctive principle that religion—whether in relation to marriage or in relation to anything else—is a purely personal matter; while civil contracts, on the other hand, are obviously social matters, and require social machinery to enforce them if necessary. For the rest, we are not aware that any Secular organisation ever advocated either polygamy or polyandry; and taking a wife for a month on trial is one of those barbaric ideas which, while they naturally occur in an old oriental book like the Bible, are quite out of harmony with modern, or even ancient, principles of civilisation.—Editor.]

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Riddle of the Universe."

Aldgate Public Baths (Goulston-street): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Use of Religion."

Camberwell (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Brandon Medland, "A Continental Ramble." With animated photos, including the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play.

East London Ethical Society (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, H. Spence, "Courage."

South London Ethical Society (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 11.15, Discussion—"Secular Education *versus* the Compromise"; 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "Church Control of Education."

West London Branch ("Victory," Newnham-street, Queen's-street, Edgware-road): November 20, at 9, Business meeting.

Open-air Propaganda.

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 3.30 and 7, A lecture.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey and George Hewitt, "The School Board Elections."

COUNTRY.

Belfast Ethical Society (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): A lecture.

Birmingham Branch: 11 and 3 (Bull Ring), H. P. Ward; 7, (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street), H. P. Ward. November 19, at 8 (Bristol-street Board Schools), H. P. Ward, "Priestcraft and Education." November 20, at 8 (Bull Ring), H. P. Ward—weather permitting.

Chatham Secular Society (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, R. P. Edwards, "The Heathen Chinee."

Glasgow (110 Brunswick-street): Mrs. H. Bradlaugh-Bonner—12, "Famines in India"; 6.30, "Paganism, Christianity, and Atheism."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Harry Snell, "Mazzini: Patriot and Prophet."

Liverpool (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. J. Parr, 'Spiritualism: Its Witness and its Facts."

Manchester Secular Hall (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Impromptu Social Evening.

Newcastle (Westminster Hall, Picton-place): 7, Discussion between Messrs. J. Boyce and J. Reed on "Which has the Better Influence on Conduct: Secularism or Christianity?"

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—November 18, Aldgate Public Baths; 26, Wellington Hall, Islington.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—November 18, Birmingham. 25, Sheffield. 26 and 27, Debate at Sheffield. December 9, Manchester; 10 and 11, Debate at Manchester.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 47. SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

Dr. Clifford and the School Board.

ON Thursday next London voters will be called upon to select a School Board for the ensuing three years. The people in whose hands the educational welfare of over half a million of children is to be placed will then be selected, and, when we bear in mind that their period of power covers about one-third of the child's school life, the occasion is certainly not lacking in importance. But for the one fatal flaw in the Act of 1870, which, in spite of the admitted failure of the religious parties to adequately conduct educational affairs, yet gave them an altogether unjustifiable influence in the schools, the issue before electors would be a simple one. The whole discussion would resolve itself into one of educational aims and methods only; and, however conflicting opinions might be on this subject, voters could at least feel that the selected candidates went to the Board with a single-hearted desire to promote the educational interests of the children, and ultimately of the nation.

In place of this desirable consummation, each of the principal parties on the Board is dominated by one motive—the desire to exclude one form of religious instruction by the introduction of another. Under whatever election cries Progressives and Moderates work, this is certainly the principal object with the leaders of these parties. The leaders of the Moderates confess, in a more or less oblique manner, that their cry of Progressive extravagance, etc., is but a subterfuge to secure a majority, and so introduce a form of religious instruction more in harmony with the teachings of the Church of England. And one need not read many of the productions of the Progressive leaders to see that they are using school improvement as a convenient means of retaining their position, and continuing a religious teaching that is wholly profitable to dissenting Christianity. How much better the leaders of the Progressives would be than their opponents, if once these latter were decisively wrecked without any possibility of succor, is open to question. For myself, I am pretty confident that the men who do not hesitate to call in the assistance of the State to perpetuate old-fashioned Sunday laws, or to protect their religious beliefs from open assault, would hardly hesitate to introduce their own sectarianism into the public schools if they thought they could safely do so.

The electoral "boss" of the London Progressives is the Rev. Dr. Clifford. Necessarily he figures largely in the machinery of the elections, and, in a circular letter to the press, he has recently pointed out what he conceives to be the duty of the electors on November 29. This is, at all costs, to keep the "priest party," the "sleepless foe of popular education," from coming into power. From my point of view, the advice is excellent, and I wish him all success in this portion of his propaganda. But if Dr. Clifford means—and of this there is little or no doubt—that we are to keep one body of parsons, or parsons' puppets, out by putting another lot in, then it is a matter of absolute indifference which succeeds. If the children of this country are to have their young minds perverted by religious instruction, given in a place where it has no defensible right to exist, then it matters little whether the teachers are made the cat's-paw of Dissenting minister or Episcopal clergyman. From a broad and comprehensive point of view, there is no difference between them. They bear different labels, true; but tear these off, mix them well up, and it would puzzle any specialist in sociological abnormalities to detect any difference. All we are concerned with is that the schools shall be restricted to their legitimate function of imparting such secular knowledge as we are agreed upon is essential to the child's welfare, and, therefore, whether the religious instruction be definite or indefinite, it is equally objectionable.

All talk of "indefinite" or "unsectarian" Christian instruction is pure humbug—mere phrases that serve to quiet the minds of careless or timid thinkers. All religious teaching is definite, and all Christian teaching is sectarian. To give children lessons in the existence and goodness of God, to nourish it upon so-called prophecies that are afterwards utilised by the parson as references to Jesus, to dose it with all the supernaturalism of the first twelve chapters of *The Acts of the Apostles*, and call this unsectarian religious instruction, is a mere play upon words. Christianity itself is only a sect—the most powerful one in this country, but a sect all the same. The plain truth is that the real policy of Dr. Clifford and his followers is precisely that of the people he is attacking—to get as much of the religion he believes in introduced into the schools as he thinks the general body of ratepayers will put up with. He quotes Sir John Gorst, appreciatively, to the effect that the Bible teaching in the Board schools is superior to that in the Voluntary schools. Perhaps so; and if it is so, the injustice inflicted on those who do not believe in the Bible is so much the more pronounced. It shows, too, how much concern Dr. Clifford really has for the conscientious scruples of those who do not agree with him. "Do not permit the Church of England to teach its principles in the schools: I do not believe in them, and it is an outrage on my conscience," he shrieks; "teach only such religious formulas as *I* believe in." Well, Dr. Clifford, but there are many who do not believe with either of you. What then? "Oh," is the ready reply, "let them be ——. They are not Christians, and, therefore, have no right to a conscience at all; or, if they will possess one, they have no right to argue that its possession entitles them to any consideration."

Dr. Clifford complains that the priest is anxious to capture the children. Very true; but what is *he* after? Is he not playing exactly the same game? Is not his chief complaint against the "clerical" party that they are seeking candidates for their Church in the public schools? And is not Dr. Clifford, in excluding from the schools everything that Dissenters disagree with, and keeping there only what they believe in, pursuing the same object? At bottom the objects of both parties are alike. At bottom the great issue is whether Church or Chapel is to utilise the schools for its own sectarian interests; and in this contest all other elements in the educational fight are only used as so many strategical moves.

There *can* be nothing but this at issue between the two parties. Dr. Clifford and those with him have talked much of the moral value of religious beliefs. But the Church party are as ready to give moral instruction, based on the Bible, as are their opponents. Only they desire to teach certain doctrines connected with the trinity, etc. Dr. Clifford asserts that their return to power will ruin the cause of education. What is it that will stand in the way of education—the moral teaching or the doctrine? Dr. Clifford can hardly mean the former, so that, as both are agreed upon that, there is only the latter to quarrel about. It is, I repeat, entirely a question of rival dogmas—the

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dogmas of the Church or the dogmas of the Chapel; and, so far as we are concerned, the sound policy to pursue at such an election is to support only such candidates as are in favor of keeping both religious parties outside, and of secularising the schools in the interests of a larger individual and national life.

Dr. Clifford observes that "Biblical instruction was not introduced into the schools of the people without grave misgivings on the part of many advanced educationalists; but thirty years' experience has completely vindicated the wisdom, the fairness, the justice, and the usefulness of the London plan." But thirty years' experience has "completely vindicated" nothing of the kind. Jews, Positivists, Agnostics, Atheists, Secularists, and others, are emphatically not convinced of "the wisdom, the fairness, the justice, and the usefulness" of compelling all to pay for teaching the religious opinions of a section, and obstructing education by endless squabbles concerning religious beliefs. Even Dr. Clifford ought to be able to see that the bare fact of his frantic appeals to keep the Moderates out, on the ground of their desire to upset the compromise, is proof positive that *they* are not contented with the justice, etc., of the existing arrangement. And if *they* were content, there are others whose principles pledge them not only to reopen the question, but to keep it open until the Bible is swept out of the schools altogether.

All that Dr. Clifford means is that *he* is satisfied with matters as they are. Naturally. At the opening of the struggle for National Education the Dissenters stood for Secular Education. It seemed to them that, if the State taught any religion in the schools, it would naturally be the State religion. Sooner than allow this, they were willing to do without any religious teaching in Board schools. But when the compromise was effected, and the Dissenters saw that there would be taught in public schools a form of Christianity that was practically of a dissenting character, the champions of Disestablishment, whose cry had been "Keep the State and religion apart," lent their heartiest support to this new form of State patronage. They accepted it as a step towards the disestablishment of a rival Church and the establishment of their own. The Dissenters gained everything and lost nothing. But of the injustice inflicted upon a large and growing section of the community by teaching religion in the schools Dr. Clifford says little and cares less: *his* religious interests are served, and it would be a historical anomaly to find a religious leader whose thoughts went beyond that.

In supporting a definite religious instruction, the Church party have at least been true to their professed principles; it is the Dissenters who have sacrificed every shred of principle they possessed, and, in the name of liberty of conscience, trampled the rights of the minority underfoot. The chief difference between Moderate and Progressive in this matter has been that, while one has been moderately consistent, the other has been progressively inconsistent and hypocritical.

Fortunately, the attention of the country is being directed more strenuously to the importance of perfecting our system of national education, and with this increased attention there must come a growing dislike to seeing one of the most important of all elections turning constantly upon the question of whether Church or Chapel is to be uppermost. And so long as the Bible is retained in the public schools this quarrel will continue, to the injury of genuine educational interests. It is the presence of the Bible in the schools that gives each party the occasion for trying to force its views on the minds of children. It is useless talking of fresh compromises, or of maintaining old ones. In this matter there should be, and can be, no compromise. It is the true function of a School Board to prepare boys and girls for the solid duties of life, not to act as referees in a series of religious fights. Let electors insist upon this before all else; let them insist upon a clean sweep being made of both Dissenting minister and Church parson, and, if they have done naught else, they will at least have cleared the way for an educational policy that shall be equally just to all, and thus promote the real interests of all concerned.

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Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ.—II.

MARIE CORELLI'S re-incarnation of Jesus Christ—"a poor thing, but mine own"—is quite up to the lady novelists' standard. The boy Manuel is all that is charming. There are frequent references to his beautiful figure, his beautiful face, his beautiful hair, his beautiful voice, and his beautiful eyes. His hair is curly, of course—for a straight-haired hero would never do, much less a bald one, like poor Julius Cæsar. And then his eyes! We all know them. The orthodox eyes of the heroes of cheap romance—now keen and piercing, like an eagle's—then large, lustrous, and melting with poetic emotion. The sort of eyes you read about, but very seldom see.

This wonderful boy is found one night, homeless and friendless, by the good Cardinal Bonpré—a benevolent old priest, altogether too good for this world; which, by the way, he quits in an astonishing manner before the novel closes. The Cardinal sticks to the boy, and the boy sticks to the Cardinal. Nothing is able to part them. Even in death they are not divided. When the world-weary servant of God has to give up the ghost, he is engaged in a sort of Christian Socialist work in London. There is, indeed, a Socialist church in this metropolls—such as we may see Mr. Keir Hardie trying to establish if he goes on at the present rate. It is not a nominal church, but a real church, with altar and crucifix, and everything elegant. To this church Cardinal Bonpré is beckoned forth one night through the darkness and rain by the boy Manuel, who has afforded many strong hints of his superhuman personality, and is now going to treat his aged friend to a complete manifestation. They enter the church together. The Cardinal hears miraculous music, and sees a vision of angels standing by the "symbol of salvation." The boy Manuel goes up to the Cross, stretches out his arms, and grows (to slow music) into the crucified Savior (aged thirty-three). Whereupon the worn-out old priest drops dead—and no wonder.

The boy Manuel—Jesus Christ, to wit—works several miracles, which we dare say are as authentic as those that were recorded by his earlier biographers. He cures a crippled lad, with twisted spine and distorted limbs, so that in a few minutes he is skipping about like a lamb. He pops up in a Paris church, when an illegitimate son tries to shoot his priestly father, and diverts the bullet, so that it hits something even more wooden than the heads of believers. On another occasion he apparently restores to life a young lady painter, Angela Sovrani, who has been stabbed to death by her affianced lover, Florian Varillo. Angela has painted the picture of the century—perhaps of the ages—for Marie Corelli is nearly always superlative; and Florian is maddened by the thought that she, a mere woman, is a greater painter than he—a lordly man. So he gives her one, two, three in the back with a dagger he has handy for such performances. Now we take it that this is very absurd. A fellow engaged to a girl who had painted a picture worth thousands of pounds would hardly kill the fine bird that laid such golden eggs. He would rather pat her on the back and say "Do it again, my dear."

Marie Corelli, we may remark, in passing, labors under the curious notion that men cannot abide clever women. "There is nothing," one of her crowd of high-born ladies says, "that frets and irks some male creatures so much as to see a woman attain, by her own brain and hand, a great position in the world." This is fantastic enough, but the novelist herself improves upon it. "All men," she says, "hate the woman who is intellectually superior to themselves." This is, perhaps, a consolatory theory to the novelist, who knows that her work is more or less despised by leading critics. These critics are men, and she is a woman, and that accounts for their depreciation! But is not this stuff and nonsense? Do men hate Jane Austen, or Elizabeth Barrett Browning, or Charlotte Bronte, or George Eliot? Let a woman display real genius, and she will not lack appreciation. We should say that the point is rather strained in *favor* of women writers. We could mention a few who receive from male critics much higher praise than they deserve. Sex tells, even in

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criticism. That is to say, in *current* criticism; but not in *lasting* criticism. Just as a dead lord ranks with commoners, so a dead woman ranks with dead men. There is no sex in the grave. What work a woman has left will be judged by the common standard. The final decision is passed by the impersonal intellect.

But to return to young Manuel. His age, as far as we can make it out, is eleven. Miracles are as easy at that age as at any other. But listen to his talk! Here is a sample :—

> "You are thinking of the wonderful plan of the world, of all the fair and glorious things God has made for those who love him. Of the splendor of Faith, and Hope, and Courage—of the soul's divine origin and responsibility—and all the joy of being able to say to the Creator of the whole universe, 'Our Father!'"

Here is another sample, *apropos* of St. Peter's, at Rome :—

> "Surely you know that there is nothing of the living God in the vast cruelty of a place where wealth and ostentation vie with intolerant officialism, bigotry, and superstition.....What has the Man of Sorrows to do with all the evil splendor of St. Peter's?—its bronzes, its marbles, its colossal statues of dead gods, its glittering altars, its miserable dreary immensity, its flaring gilding and insolent vulgarity of cost."

What talk for young eleven! What would he be at twenty-two? The world would have to suppress him as an intolerable nuisance. It seems to us that any boy of eleven who vomited up the dictionary, as Manuel does, should be taken in hand by his father, or perhaps by the family doctor. Dealt with in time, the malady is often curable; neglected, it generally leads to the lunatic asylum. The French call it by a high-sounding name. The Americans call it "swelled head."

The principal persons in this novel are "preachy." They spout whenever they find an opportunity; and they all spout alike. Whether it is the grand old Cardinal Bonpré, or the eloquent reformed Abbé Vergniaud, or that miraculous orator, Gys Grandit, the French Christian Socialist, or that still more miraculous orator, Aubrey Leigh, the English Christian Socialist, or the boy Manuel, who is no less a person than Jesus Christ himself, reincarnated to make Marie Corelli's financial holiday; no matter which of them it is, the spouting is always of the same brand. All of them talk pure Corelli. Every one delivers a bit of the lady's Christian Socialist sermon. And what is her Christian Socialism? It is neither Socialism nor Christianity—it is nothing but cheap clap-trap and vague sentimentality. Nobody can tell what the lady would be at; probably she does not know herself. She takes the "pathetic exaggerations" of the Sermon on the Mount, dilutes them with unlimited gush, and deluges her readers with the "weak, washy, everlasting flood."

We beg pardon for mentioning Shakespeare in this connection, but he could introduce a crowd of men and women and make them all talk in character. We know them, not by what is said about them, but by what they say and do themselves. This is the art that vies with great creative nature. But inferior writers too often come to grief when they work their puppets. It is so easy to describe your hero as wise and witty; it is so hard to make him talk wisdom and wit. When he opens his mouth he is apt to prove a fiasco. In the same way, the wonderful orators—they are all "wonderful"—in Marie Corelli's novel can only be accepted as such until they begin business. From that moment we recognise them as the most ridiculous frauds. We sicken at their insufferable tirades. They give us words, words, words—without a grain of substance. Their creator is unable to supply them with anything else. For, while Marie Corelli has a certain capacity for writing "taking" fiction for pious sentimentalists, when it comes to real brains she is as shallow as a saucer. In the whole of this book there is not a definite idea, nor a single sentence worth remembering.

Fancy, then, the "cheek" of this lady in putting Jesus Christ—a reincarnated Jesus Christ, a second advent Jesus Christ—into a popular novel. With all her affected reverence, the act is sheer blasphemy. How any sincere Christian can tolerate it is past our comprehension. From the artistic point of view her offence is still greater. It would take a bold writer to put Shakespeare into a book and make him talk. Landor did it, but he was a man of genius, and he had the sense to take Shakespeare as a lad in the deer-stalking period. He did not assume to put words into the mouth of the greatest of poets at the full maturity of his powers. But our lady novelist is quite capable of doing this. Indeed, she does worse. She brings on God Almighty and makes him talk. Her apologists may say that it is a juvenile God, for Manuel is only a boy. But a God is a God. There is no gradation, because there is no development. Now the question would arise in a serious mind, How shall I make Omnipotence act? How shall I make Omniscience speak? Clearly the task is impossible. Milton essayed it, and *he* came to grief. His real hero, Satan, is always magnificent. The poet's genius dilates to its utmost capacity in dealing with that tremendous (but finite) figure. His angels and demons—especially the demons—are splendid successes. But his God the Father prates and quibbles "like a school divine," and the other persons of the Trinity are no less dismal failures. From the nature of the case this was inevitable. And if the mighty Milton failed, how should poor Marie Corelli succeed? Her very attempt is a piece of intolerable impudence. We may add that the boy Manuel is an unwholesome little prig. He is not a boy at all. Neither divine nor human, he is merely a walking phonograph. The lady novelist talks into him, and he talks it out again.

G. W. Foote.

(To be concluded.)

If not Christianity, What?

The majority of those who profess Christianity entertain remarkable views as to the nature and efficacy of their faith. They not only deny that the evils and defects of society are the result of their system, but they credit their religion with all the progress that has been made in modern times. It has been truly said that, as a rule, a man is supposed to know himself better than anyone else knows him. But there are many important instances where other people can estimate a person more correctly than he can estimate himself. They will take a less passionate view of his character. They will be in a better position to compare him with others, and thus judge more accurately of his relations to, and of his comparative place in the scale of, humanity. As with individuals, so it is with systems and with generations. An age is incapable in many respects of properly knowing itself. It has only one test by which to estimate its merits and demerits. It cannot compare itself with future ages, which lie in the womb of the unknown. It can only judge of itself by times gone by. And as every age, even the darkest and most lethargic, is, in some instances, more advanced than its predecessor, a survey of itself is extremely apt to assume the form of self-gratulation.

Orthodox Christians are so possessed with this self-gratulation as to the supposed influence of their faith that they arrogate to themselves the delusion that it is the only force capable of regenerating society. Hence they repeatedly ask, "If not Christianity, what?" The interrogation is usually put thus: "If you take away Christianity, what will you put in its place?" Now, to the superficial thinker no doubt this inquiry appears unanswerable. Upon reflection, however, it should be seen that it is based upon the assumption that Christianity is true, and suited to remedy the evils which mar the happiness of the human race. But it should be remembered that this assumption has not been proved, and therefore the question is by no means a pertinent one. If by the "truth" of Christianity is meant that it is a system superior to all others, and that its origin was unique, then, instead of being true, it is absolutely false. It cannot be too often repeated that there is nothing unique in the origin and nature of the Christian religion, and, moreover, that its teachings contain nothing useful that cannot be found elsewhere. These facts are so evident that their foremost expounders now admit that their inculcations are not original. It is also quite evident that Christianity is not suited to meet the demands of modern life. The

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principal factors that have promoted human progress are: (1) The development of the intellect—this practically rules the world; (2) the expansion of mechanical genius—this provides for the ever-increasing needs of mankind; (3) the extension of national commerce—this furnishes an opportunity for the interchange of ideas; (4) a knowledge of science—this reveals the power and value of natural agencies; (5) the possession of political and social rights—this is the best means of securing just government, and of realising the equity of societarian life; and (6) the spread of scepticism—this maintains the right of mental liberty.

Now, these factors are not to be found in Christianity. Christ, in teaching persecution, retarded rather than aided intellectual freedom; in ascribing disease to the possession of devils, he ignored the facts of physiology; in demanding that man should give his first and principal attention to heaven, he caused the neglect of the duties of earth; in teaching the "divine government" of the world, he made political efforts comparatively useless; in extolling the virtues of poverty, he depreciated wealth, which, when properly used, is of an undoubted service to man; and his advice to his disciples, that when they appeared before the "magistrates and powers" they were to take no thought how or what they should say, "for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke xii. 11, 12), was no encouragement to educational training. To those who hold that Christianity is a secular regenerating force, we ask: What science did Christ initiate? What hospitals did he establish? What libraries did he institute? What societies for social reform did he organise? What association did he form to obtain the domestic rights of women, the political equity of man, and the kind treatment of the lower animals? What movement did he originate to relieve the world of the pangs of poverty and the curse of slavery? Finally, what principles did he lay down to inspire within man the spirit of self-help and of self-reliance, which are the basis of all personal and general improvements? Is it not the fact that reforms connected with all the above subjects have been won since the alleged death of Christ?

While, therefore, answering the question, "If not Christianity, what?" it is necessary to bear in mind the above facts as to the non-value of Christianity as a practical factor in modern progress. If it is destitute of the required remedial power to cure the evils and wrongs which abound on every hand, the sooner that fact is known the better; and even if we have nothing to replace it, the world will lose nothing by its removal. The fact is, error must be destroyed before truth can take its place. It would be useless to sow grain in a field covered with thistles and weeds. Any proficient cultivator of the soil knows that he would be wasting his time in such an operation. His first work would be to clear the ground of all useless and injurious material, and then to prepare it for the reception of the new seed. So it is with the human mind; while it is crowded with foolish and erroneous notions it will be impossible to invest it with correct conceptions of things. Besides, those who are the victims of traditional error have no desire, so long as they believe it to be true, to get rid of it. Hence, the necessity for destroying whatever prevents the recognition and acceptance of that which is true. The Christian who believes in the alleged truth and consolation of his faith does not want anything in its place. He is quite satisfied that that which he has been taught is the right thing. Those who adopt their religion in the ordinary manner, without inquiry, feel no need of change. They may believe the most palpable error; yet, if they feel it to be true, it appears to them a verity. Until, therefore, the fallacy of their opinions is made clear to them, there will be but little hope of their seeing "the error of their ways." People do not, as a rule, go to the exchange mart to do business if they are already satisfied with what they have. Those only patronise such places who require something different from what they possess. Hence the question, when asked by a contented believer, "What will you give me in the place of my religion?" is an idle one, and is often put to avoid the discussions of the merits or demerits of the religion itself. Of course, it is a personal matter whether one will discuss the subject or not, but it is an indisputable fact that he who knows only one side of a question is less capable of judging upon which side lies the truth than the man who has examined all that can be said on both sides.

It is quite true that there may be many aspects of probable truths, and it is only by comparison that a sensible and defensible conclusion can be arrived at. A person may change from one religion to another as easily as he can change his style of dress, but a change from Christianity to Secularism involves a process of thought, an investigation of evidence, an inquiry into the basis of authority, and into the validity of the conclusions of reason. This may be the study of months or years, for sound conclusions cannot be hastily reached. Moreover, any well-grounded opinion must be the result of the study of the inquirer himself, just as the acquirement of knowledge is the result of the student's own efforts, and not of those of the teacher, who is only an aid in intellectual pursuits. We have no confidence in so-called conversions when suddenly brought about. Such changes are generally the result of emotional supremacy unaided by the dictates of reason. A great drawback of Christianity is that most of its adherents have been secured either through unquestioned acceptance of opinions submitted to them or through an appeal to their fears about a future existence. Secularism, on the contrary, has no such objectionable methods. Its appeal is to reason, not emotion; to facts, not fears; and to argument, not blind faith.

The question still remains, "If not Christianity, what?" The answer shall be given in my article next week.

Charles Watts.

The Listless Lord.

Through untold æons vast
She [Nature] let him lurk and cower;
'Twould seem he climbed at last
In mere fortuitous hour,
Child of a thousand chances *'neath the indifferent sky.*
—William Watson.

A notable article appears in the *Christian World* from the pen of "J.B." It is headed "The Divine Indifference." If it stopped at that heading, it would probably be all right, for all the facts of nature seem to point to the conclusion which these words express. But the writer evidently means the heading to be a question, and he deals with it in that sense, to the extent of two columns of the *C. W.* But he does not remove the impression created by the words with which he starts. On the contrary, after considering all that he has to say, one is still inclined to think that the "Divine indifference" is a fact, if we go so far as to admit the existence of any Divine being at all.

The writer in the *C. W.* acknowledges that there are "times in history when a mortal chill seems to fall upon the human soul. A deadly suspicion spreads abroad that man is, after all, in a universe that is deaf and dumb to his prayer."

That "deadly suspicion" exists in the minds of many thoughtful persons, who are very much disposed to think that it is even more than a suspicion. If one regards the facts of life as they are, it seems difficult to resist the conclusion that the universe is deaf and dumb to prayer. The ordinary newspaper press supplies, almost every week, a multitude of instances which distinctly negative any idea that prayer, in itself and in its results, is more than the mere expression of a desire. It has no potency in the sense of eliciting a definite response—no ultimate result which may be distinctly traceable to a spiritual reply to a human supplication.

"Men argue that our moral code is provincial" is the next assertion of the *C. W.* contributor. "Its writ," he says, "does not run beyond given boundaries. It is valid for certain spheres of human conduct." But how far does this carry, as related to the immeasurable realm outside? He admits that "Nature appears to know nothing of our morality. She slays wholesale, and in her slaying takes no heed of ethical distinction. When the ship goes down, or the earthquake engulfs the city, the pious and prayerful are swept away just as remorselessly as the murderer and the thief. People living sheltered lives may dream of love as at the heart of things; but the man on a raft in the pitiless Atlantic, or staggering, lost and hopeless, to his death in the

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Australian bush, finds no suggestion of this friendliness."

There are still stronger considerations which indispose people to "trust in the Lord." Their life's experience is probably quite convincing that either the Lord does not exist, or that he is listless, languid, and inactive. According to the *C. W.*, the earthquake at Lisbon made multitudes of people Atheists—as well, indeed, it might: "We should not wonder if the survivors of the recent tidal wave at Galveston found their faith as well as their property submerged. At such times men echo Carlyle's outburst, 'God sits in heaven and does nothing!' And history often staggers us as much as nature. We picture to ourselves what happens in a single twenty-four hours on this planet—hideous massacres in China, the kidnapping of slaves in Central Africa, the brutal orgies repeated every night in the great cities, with their engulfments of virtue—these things happen, and there seems no outside response, no faintest sign that any moral sensitiveness beyond our own has thereby been touched."

What does this supposed evidence about "Divine indifference" amount to? asks the Rev. J. Brierley. He argues that, looked at narrowly, it resolves itself into a series of surface appearances of really no weight as against the other side. But is this so? He appears to think that, if we grumble because the good man as well as the evil perishes in a shipwreck or falls from a precipice, we are simply impeaching the results of Nature's laws. No rational person would impeach Nature's laws. It is because it is pretended that there is a Providence behind them, and a Providence who invites and listens to prayer, and responds, that we offer objection—not to Nature's laws, but to priestly false pretences.

This *Christian World* writer would have us hold our tongues about the physical evils he enumerates. The reason he assigns for them is the uniformity of natural law. But that excludes Providence and disposes of prayer. The *C. W.* contributor continues in the same line of argument, observing that what to the modern conscience is, perhaps, the greatest stumbling block, is what seems to be the Divine indifference to man's moral and religious aspirations: "Earnest men watch with dismay the immoralities around them, the orgies of lust and crime, the prosperity of villains, the grinding of the poor, and in their struggle against it they seem to get no help. They read of earlier revelations and interpositions, but the events of to-day appear to carry 'no revelation, except that nobody cares.' At times the dumb silence of that outside universe to which we turn our eyes seems almost maddening."

Yes, says "J.B.," this may *seem* a ground to complain of the Divine indifference, but it is not a real ground. Well, all it is possible for a plain person to say is that he follows what seems to be the dictates of common sense, founded on his personal observation and experience. Certainly he is not at all inclined to accept paradoxical explanations such as those presented in the article referred to.

Everything points to the conclusion that the Lord is deaf, listless, indifferent to human wants, complaints, appeals—so completely that religious advocates and controversialists insisting on the doctrines of Providence and prayer are likely to achieve no purpose than that of driving rational persons into Atheism.

Francis Neale.

A Handful of Epitaphs.

I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain. —*Gray.*

Death, not armed with any dart,
But crowned with poppies. —*Julian Fane.*

From the earliest times men have sought to express their loves and joys, their sorrows and hatreds, in epitaphs and epigrams, and to inscribe them on sepulchral urns, tablets, or gravestones, as memorials of their pleasure or their pain. It is certain that inscriptions on remarkable, and to commemorate extraordinary, events, were in use many centuries before the alleged birth of the mythical Christ. One of the most ancient epitaphs is that which Assyria's last king, Sardanapalus, about 876 B.C., ordered to be engraved on his tomb, which was to be seen at Anchiale five centuries later:—

"Sardanapalus built Anchiale and Tarsus in one day. Go, passenger, eat, drink, and rejoice, for the rest is nothing."

It is, however, among the Greeks that we find epitaphs properly so-called; and these, in many instances, of a very high excellence. Among the most famous is the inscription by Simonides for the heroes of Thermopylæ:—

"Stranger, tell the Lacedemonians that we lie here, in obedience to their commands."

The propensity for writing punning epitaphs existed at a very early period. The inscription on the tombstone of Pausanias, the Greek physician, contains a pun on his name. The first two lines have thus been translated:—

Pausanias, not so named without a cause,
Who oft to pain has given a pause.

The Romans do not appear to have indulged much in epitaphs of this description. They preferred a more serious note. Who ever wearies of Martial's *Erotion*—so prettily Englished by Leigh Hunt?—

Underneath this greedy stone
Lies little sweet Erotion,
Whom the Fates, with hearts as cold,
Nipped away at six years old.
Those, whoever thou may'st be,
That hast this small field after me,
Let the yearly rites be paid
To her little slender shade,
So shall no disease or jar
Hurt thy house or chill thy Lar,
But this tomb be here alone
The only melancholy stone.

In England, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tombs seem to have been thought the proper place, not only for puns, but for anagrams, acrostics, chronograms, Irish bulls, and similar curiosities. Many of them seem to have been written as if meant solely to excite ridicule and laughter. For example:—

On a Man named Fish.

Worms bait for Fish; but here's a sudden change,
Fish's bait for worms—is not that passing strange?

On Mrs. Death.

Here lies Death's wife; when this way next you tread
Be not surprised should *Death* himself be dead.

On Archbishop Potter, ob., 1747.

Alack, and well-a-day.
Potter himself is turned to clay!

On R. Button, in a Churchyard near Salisbury.

Oh! sun, moon, stars, and ye celestial poles!
Are graves, then, dwindled into *Button* holes?

On John Penny.

Reader! of *Cash*, if thou'rt in want of any,
Dig four feet deep, and thou shalt find a penny.

The complimentary epitaph seldom pleases. To lie like a tombstone has become a proverb. Pope's famous epitaph on Newton,

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night;
God said, Let Newton be! and all was light,

is a typical example. It is hyperbolical, and entirely out of character with the man it was intended to honor.

The tender and emotional epitaphs have a tendency to become either insipid or silly. But Herrick has shown us how to rival Martial:—

Upon a Child that Died.

Here she lies a pretty bud,
Lately made of flesh and blood;
Who, as soon fell fast asleep,
As her little eyes did peep.
Give her strewings, but not stir
The earth that lightly covers her.

Ben Jonson's beautiful epitaph on a child beginning—

Weep with me all you that read
This little story;
And know for whom the tear you shed
Death's self is sorry,

is fine poetry; but it is not Death as known by mourners.

The tendency of the present day seems to be to do away with epitaphs, and merely inscribe on the grave the name and age of the deceased, with the addition of a tag from the Bible, or a verse from a hymn, which may or may not be poetry. But, apart from the conventional texts, the note of Christianity is seldom struck

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in these inscriptions. There is a deep-rooted Secularism in people which is for ever bubbling up and asserting itself in the most unexpected ways. That there are so few inscriptions, other than religious, is to be attributed to the prejudice of the clergy, who object strongly to anything that clashes with their own views. Literary inscriptions are rare. We noticed a tombstone in Nunhead Cemetery with the dying words of Hamlet, "The rest is silence," and a gravestone in Lee Cemetery with an entire poem by Longfellow. Personal inscriptions are to be found scattered up and down our churchyards and cemeteries. On a tombstone in Norwood Cemetery one reads, "Poor Old Granny."

Byron mentions two touching epitaphs which he saw at Ferrara: *Martini Luigi implora pace* and *Lucrezia Picini implora eterna quieta*. Small wonder they struck a responsive chord in the world-worn heart of our English Catullus.

Keats desired that on his grave should be written :—

Here lies one whose name was writ in water.

Water! Say rather in fire. In place of Keats's modest epitaph we have that glorious elegy written by his greater contemporary, Shelley, that perfect poem *Adonais*, perhaps the finest elegiac poem in the English language, not even excepting Milton's *Lycidas*. Nor will it be forgotten how, a few years afterwards, in the same burying ground was placed another stone, recording that below rested the passionate heart of Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Shakespeare's lines on the dead Duncan are a model of simplicity and elegance :—

Duncan is in his grave;
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor prison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, *nothing*,
Can touch him further.

Catullus has written one of the finest epitaphs. It is in every way admirable. The lines are in memory of his brother :—

O'er many a realm, o'er many an ocean tost,
I come, my brother, to salute thy ghost!
Thus on thy tomb sad honor to bestow,
And vainly call the silent dust below.
Thou, too, art gone! Yes, thee I must resign,
My more than brother—ah! no longer mine,
The funeral rites to ancient Romans paid,
Duly I pay to thy lamented shade.
Take them—these tears their heart-felt homage tell;
And now—all hail for ever, and farewell!

To such a voice the poetic ear still listens, and will listen ever, in preference to more religious harmonies. The fancy recognises in the splendid poetry of this old-world Secularist a symbol of the old Romans, whose splendid physical organisation and perfect ideals made them, indeed, "Masters of the World."

MIMNERMUS.

Brotherly Love in Christian Scotland.

A Scotland without its U. P. and its Free Kirks is a changed land altogether. Very beautiful and comforting at first sight is that union consummated at Edinburgh recently of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches. It would take many columns of print to explain the origin of these bodies, and the result would not be satisfactory in itself, or salutary as a lesson in Church governance. But the fact that they did exist, and were inimical, was writ large in Scottish life. The U. P. and the Free Kirk ministers would not exchange pulpits. Either would preach in the Established Kirk, but not for each other. Their jealousies and rivalries in little towns and villages formed the staple of the local gossip. At the curling or the bowling the Free Kirk and the U. P. ministers stood aloof, and would rather play against each other than on the same side. At the gowff it was the same. The caddies partook in the rivalry. "Dod," said the Free Kirk caddie, as the minister's put, badly hit, managed somehow to reach the hole, "that was a real U. P. shot, that yin!" Their wives would not speak; their families passed by on opposite sides; they never dealt with the same baker or drank the same whisky. And is this for ever gone—gone in the name of peace? What is peace when fifty years of national humor is tumbling about one's ears? If this goes on much longer, we shall soon see but one creed in Scotland, one Kirk, and one deity. Each body had its own deity in the old days—a deity whose denominational attributes they defined every Sunday in long prayers and longer sermons, lest he should forget, and attach himself to another body. "Send rain, O Lord, send rain," prayed the U. P. elder; "an' if ye could send it afore John Cameron gets the roof on his byre it wad remind him o' his backslidin'." For John Cameron had gone over to the Free Kirk, tempted by a fee to ring the bell and sweep the pulpit.—*The Outlook.*

Acid Drops.

AFTER displaying his "want of administrative capacity," as Lord Roberts called it, at Spion Kop, Sir Charles Warren has returned to England, where he will always be known as the hero of "Bloody Sunday." When he is elevated to the peerage he should take the title of the Duke of Trafalgar Square. Meanwhile he is at his pious old tricks. If he could not beat the Boers, he can at least serve the Lord. Some people think that is all he is fit for. He might have made a passable clergyman. At any rate, he is great at religious meetings. The other night he presided at a gathering of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and told the audience—or congregation, or whatever it was—of the glories and beauties of fighting. And the good Christians listened and applauded. After which they went home, and, before lying down to sleep, offered up their prayers to the Prince of Peace.

Lord Rosebery is amongst the prophets. In his Rectorial address at Glasgow he brought the "divine finger," nails and all, into his peroration. Is this the result of his studying Cromwell? Or is it the result of his studying Napoleon? Perhaps he has laid to heart the lessons of Mr. Gladstone's life, and has come to the conclusion that a reputation for piety is indispensable to a Liberal leader. *That* might account for the "divine finger" as well as the sale of his lordship's racehorses.

Mr. John Burns has been singing (to an interviewer) the praises of Puritanism. When we are engaged in a death-wrestle with a powerful enemy, or a combination of powerful enemies, it is the Puritans, in Mr. Burns's opinion, who will have to save England. Only the Ironsides, he says, will be able to do it. "Honest John" forgets that the Cavaliers fought just as well as the Puritans. What they lacked was a leader of genius like Cromwell, and the Cromwellian organisation and discipline. The Puritans made no particular headway as Puritans. They were routed again and again until Cromwell's mind and hand, backed up by adequate resources, shaped them into an invincible army. We refer to this simply because we don't like to see Mr. Burns playing so much into the hands of the political Nonconformists.

Mr. Graham Wallas and the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam must surely wince at the praise showered upon them publicly by the Rev. Dr. John Clifford. It was so good of them to "stick to the Compromise"—that is, to stick to what Lord Salisbury well called Nonconformist Religion in the Board Schools. Mr. Headlam is a Churchman, and Mr. Graham Wallas is reputed to be an Atheist. No wonder Dr. Clifford is proud of their support. But how the "Progressive" Pope must chuckle to himself, and perhaps his Dissenting "pals," in his own sanctum!

South Wales has suffered a terrible shock. Lots of the natives hardly know whether they are on their heads or their heels. The Rev. E. Treharne-Jones, curate of Treherbert, has turned Secularist, and publicly recanted Christianity. This gentleman is a native of Merionethshire. Born in 1863, he is still comparatively young. He was educated at St. Bee's College, Cumberland, and was ordained in the diocese of Norwich. According to the *Rhondda Leader*, which interviewed him, his doubts were first aroused by the hypocrisy he witnessed in all Christian denominations. Then he began to give up doctrine after doctrine, until at last he was constrained to say that he "believed in nothing outside the working of the ordinary laws of nature." Like a man, he engaged the Public Hall, Treherbert, for Sunday evening, and lectured on "Christianity a Myth." Before doing so, he inserted the following letter in the *Rhondda Leader*:—"Sir,—A short time ago 'Secularist' advised your readers to pull for the shore of Secularism. This, of course, called forth a number of so-called replies. I followed the discussion with interest, as I have done others before, to see if any solid reason was advanced whereby the truth of that fossilised creed called Christianity could be established. As usual, it was all in vain. Since that time I have ceased to be one of the paid defenders of that self-same creed, and am free to give unto others the honest convictions of my own mind. Being the paid servant of an organisation for the promulgation of the views and opinions of men who lived many centuries ago, I could only speak the hackneyed lesson which had been put in my mouth. I have now been emancipated from that slavery, and my mind is free to wander wherever my reason, observation, and experience may lead me. I would feel thankful if you could allow me a little of your valuable space to re-echo the sentiments of Secularist, and to advise Christians to take off the bandage of reverence from their eyes, drive the phantoms of fear from their hearts, and push from the throne of their brain the cowled form of superstition. Then to read their Bibles as they would any other book, and see how many of the Jewish fables contained

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therein they are able to believe. I shall be at the Town Hall, Treherbert, on Sunday night, to point out a few of the impossible and incredible passages contained in that book that we have been taught to be above all doubt and criticism. Should any of the paid defenders of this antiquated creed desire to meet me in a public and friendly discussion of this question, I shall be very happy to make arrangements with them.—Thanking you in anticipation, I am, etc."

It is evident from this letter that Mr. Treharne-Jones has been reading Ingersoll. It is also evident, from what he told his interviewer, that he has begun to feel the force of Christian bigotry. "I know," he said, "I shall be subjected to tremendous persecution. The forces of the Church organisation will be brought very strongly to bear against me. I have already had to change my lodgings at almost a moment's notice."

Mr. Treharne-Jones delivered his lecture on "Christianity a Myth" on Sunday evening. The spacious hall was nearly filled with a mixed audience of Freethinkers and Christians. A correspondent informs us that the ex-reverend gentleman gave "a most powerful and elaborate address." He is no compromiser. He has made a clean sweep of his old faith, and is now a full-fledged Secularist. At the close a vote of thanks was proposed to the lecturer. An orthodox bigot opposed, but the vote was carried by an overwhelming majority. Several questions were asked and satisfactorily answered. We expect to give a report of Mr. Treharne-Jones's lecture next week.

The *Church Gazette* has been discussing in a leader "The Mind of the English Cleric." The subject, though not a great one, is open to searching comment. The *C. G.* says: "It is asserted, and, we believe, fairly well made good, that, taking things on the whole, and not counting exceptions, the general tendency of clerical sentiment and opinion has been in one direction, while that of the bulk of the Church laity has been in quite another, which, if not precisely opposite, is at any rate in a totally different direction. Put briefly, it comes to this—that the priests are all going one way, and their people are all going the other way."

"No church," says the *C. G.*, "can do without its laity, and even with a laity that is cool and alienated any and every church must speedily come to nothing." It goes on to describe the difference between the parson of a hundred years ago and the cleric of to-day. The "old-world parsonship," it says, "has gone away, perhaps never to be seen again. In place of it we have a specialised type of cleric with its special views and interests, and one, too, which does not seem to understand the thoughts of the people it undertakes to direct. This is, perhaps, somewhere about where we are just now."

"What trouble," says Dean Pigou, "my surname has given, as it is!—Pigue, Peikew, Bigout, Peggue, Pigout, Ligou, Picue, Pigoe, Puegou (very ingenious), Pico. In schooldays it gave no trouble. 'Ou' was considered superfluous by my schoolfellows. It says much for the authorities of the Post Office that a telegram addressed to the 'Rev. Mr. Puggie' eventually reached me. I was introduced in a drawing-room in Belgrave-square as the 'Rev. Mr. Pickles.' In vain did I endeavor to impress on Jeames Plush that my name was Pigou. He recklessly abandoned himself to 'Pickles.' It must have been he who announced the archdeacon and his wife as 'the Archdeacon and the Venerable Mrs.,' etc. What most hurt me was, after forty years in the Christian ministry, to have a letter addressed to me the 'Rev. Mr. Pagan'!"

We seem to suffer from no lack of busy-body organisations at the present time. The Lord's Day Observance Society—which we could very well spare—is trying to justify its existence and its claims to subscriptions. Just now it is renewing the agitation against the letting of Board schools on Sunday evenings for secular purposes. As if, indeed, the ratepayers had no right to their own schools. Regard, of course, would be had to the caretakers in the Sunday use of the schools by some provision for extra assistance. But to say that the schools are not to be used when a legitimate application is made for them is a monstrous piece of nonsense. The motive of the objection is obvious. Parsons and ministers are afraid of rival attractions to their church and chapel performances.

So it seems that it is wrong even to look at chrysanthemums on a Sunday. Perhaps the next thing will be that the Sabbatarians will want to shut out a glimpse of the sky. At a recent chrysanthemum show at Middleton a letter was read from a Rochdale firm of solicitors, threatening the committee with prosecution under the Lord's Day Observance Act if they kept the exhibition open on Sunday. The committee decided to keep it open, but not to charge for admission. When will the silly, vexatious, and obsolete law relating to Sunday be repealed?

Lady Harberton has been drawing argumentative support for the rational dress this week from the garb of our bishops, says the *Topical Times*. But this is putting our episcopacy to base uses. Besides, the bishops wear aprons. If the bloomer girl would do the same, all might yet be well; and the edge would doubtless be taken off the satire of the small boy.

Dean Ramsay used to relate an amusing tale about one of the Earls of Lauderdale. His lordship was taken very ill, the worst symptom being insomnia in an aggravated form. His little son, hearing that recovery would be impossible without sleep, said: "Send for the preaching man frae Livingstone, for fayther aye sleeps when that minister is in the pulpit."

A Paris correspondent reports a strange case of religious madness which occurred at the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette. A woman, Mdme. de P., had for some time past been suffering from neuralgia, and her mother, notwithstanding her great age of seventy years, came from the provinces to nurse her. She only became worse, however, and showed signs of mental weakness, speaking constantly of God, the saints, and her eternal sojourn. The concierge and the neighbors heard fearful cries early on Wednesday morning. Mdme. de P. was found standing over her mother with her hands at her throat, and holding on so tightly that the old lady could scarcely breathe. The daughter was invoking the Virgin Mary, and then she stopped her prayer to ask her mother to join her in heaven. The police had great difficulty in getting her away from her mother, whom she nearly strangled.

The Emperor of Germany is not peculiar in his dislike for long sermons, but every victim of the long-winded preacher is not privileged to speak his mind so freely as William did on one occasion. His Majesty, a few weeks ago, said to a celebrated, but rather showy and conceited, German preacher: "Herr Pastor, please do not be offended when I tell you that your sermons are too long!" "But, your Majesty," replied the pastor, "when I get warmed to my subject I forget everything and everybody, and get quite carried away, your Majesty!" The Kaiser, who had had an hour's torture from the reverend gentleman that very morning, curtly answered: "Like you, sir, in one way; when you preach I forget everything; but, unlike you in another respect, I am not fortunate enough to get 'carried away.'"

"On principle," the members of a chapel in the Llangollen district have denounced dancing. They regret that "another dancing class" has been commenced in the district, but their regret and remonstrance have not prevented the class going on. Why should Bible-believers object to dancing? It seems to have been not unknown in early Biblical times, and there is nothing in Scripture that condemns it.

The Isle of Man, like the soldier in Jacques' familiar speech, is "full of strange oaths." Mr. Shee, Q.C., before beginning his judicial duties as special commissioner in connection with the Dumbell case, was required to swear that he would administer justice as impartially "as the herring's backbone doth lie in the middle of the fish." The Isle of Man is not the only place in the world in which the animal kingdom plays a part in the making of oaths. One of the many modes in which Chinese witnesses are impressed with the importance of telling the truth is slicing off the head of a fowl—a ceremony which is supposed to represent the unhappy fate of the perjurer.

Many Indian witnesses are sworn on tigers' skins, in the belief that if they defile their lips with lies their bodies will become food for tigers; while others stand on lizards' skins, and ask that their bodies shall be covered with the scales of the reptiles if they fail to tell the truth. A Norwegian witness asks that his meadows and cattle shall be cursed if he swears falsely. "Cursed be my cattle," he exclaims, "my beasts, my sheep, so that after this day they may never thrive or benefit me; yea, cursed may I be and everything I possess."

A census was taken on Sunday, October 13, of the attendance at sixty-six churches in Wigan, with the result that only 10,954 persons were found to be present. Of these only 3,228 were men, the rest being women and children.

Five people, four of them belonging to the choir, attended on Sunday (Nov. 4) evening's service at the parish church of Melplash, a Dorsetshire village. Undisturbed, the vicar preached an elaborate discourse, the service lasting fully an hour and a half. Dorsetshire has not the only parish church in which a congregation of one person only has attended the service. Mr. K. Harrington writes that at a church in Deal, where choral evensong is sung on Wednesdays, on one evening the parson, verger, organ-blower, and organist were the only officials in their places, and the reverend gentleman

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went through the whole of the service and preached an eloquent sermon to a congregation consisting of one lady.

An accommodating gentleman was Colonel Skinner. We learn that at Delhi there are three places of worship raised to immortalise his name. His first wife was an Englishwoman, and persuaded him to build an Anglican church there. Then he married a Mohammedan, with the result that he built a mosque in the same street, opposite the church. Last of all he married a Hindoo, when he could not do less than pay for the erection of a Hindoo temple, which now stands a little way off from the others.

An advertisement in a morning contemporary propounds a nice metaphysical question under the guise of a domestic want: "Can any lady recommend a cook who would value Christian principles?" Are the Christian principles of the mistress or the servant? And what is to prove the basis of valuation?

The *Church Gazette* comments on the complaint that the diocese of Llandaff has "recently been informed, on the authority of the Bishop and one of his archdeacons, that Sunday-schools are a failure." The *Church Gazette* says: "We agree in the fact of comparative failure, but we think that it is due to the other simple fact that, for the most part, they are ill-conducted, exert no discipline, and have very little to teach."

Thus the sage editor of the *Sunday Companion* admonishes a correspondent who appears to have found more in Holy Writ than it is advisable he should know: "The Song of Solomon is a portion of Holy Scripture which should be read with discretion, W. J. B. It has always been considered the inspired composition of the Royal poet (1 Kings iv. 32) whose name it bears, and in authority equal to the other Books of the Old Testament. The most judicious and serious commentators for ages have regarded it as an allegory setting forth the spiritual union between Christ and His Church. Such a view (which was held by the late C. H. Spurgeon) may be said to tone down some of the figurative expressions occurring in it that seem too luxuriant for Western taste. The Rev. Dr. Joseph Angus, Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, points out that several terms in the passage you mention belong properly to the dress, and not to the person, while nothing is described save chaste affection. Yet, as I have already observed, the Song is not to be examined 'rashly, thoughtlessly, or lightly,' but 'advisedly, reverently, and in the fear of God.'"

It is hardly necessary to say that there is not the remotest reference to Christ and his Church in the Song of Solomon. The headings in the Bible are mendacious to the last degree. The Song is simply a love-poem.

In a pensive tone of regret, the *British Weekly* observes: "One cannot read *Vanity Fair* without seeing the concentrated bitterness with which Thackeray regarded evangelical religion, and sorrowfully recognising that he had something to justify him."

The Rev. R. C. Joynt, vicar of Gipsy Hill, feels that the clergy are not above reproach in regard to their protestations as to the sanctity of the Lord's Day, and the fact that some of them do not hesitate to travel on that day. He tells us that he was saying good-bye to a friend of his who had just preached a sermon in the church. His friend entered a hansom whilst a group of young fellows stood near the churchyard gate. "Their observations were not intended for either my friend's ear or mine, but they will probably never be forgotten by either of us."

The *Freethinker* has indulged in an ill-informed and ill-natured assault upon Spiritualism and its mediums. Its remarks upon Henry Slade are especially foolish. In no particular is it accurate. We admit that Mr. Watts has fairly well stated the popular opinion, and the prejudiced version of the facts; but he ought to know better than to retail these for real Freethinkers. There is no bondage so bad as bondage to popular opinions and prejudiced versions. The usual lying about the trial of Henry Slade and what followed is "enough to provoke a saint."—*Light.*

Our Spiritualist contemporary makes a considerable mistake. Mr. Watts is not the *Freethinker*. He is one of its valued contributors, and is responsible for what he says in his own articles, which are always signed. Nor do we think that Mr. Watts's articles on Spiritualism were at all ill-natured. He simply spoke the truth as he saw it, and it would be better to answer him than to call him names. With regard to Henry Slade, we remember quite well his being sentenced to imprisonment as an impostor. The case occurred in London. We were editing the *Secularist* at the time, and Slade's trial was made the subject of an article by our then colleague, the distinguished poet James Thomson ("B. V.").

"Mayor's Sunday" at Blackburn was marked by a special sermon in Clayton-street Wesleyan Chapel, the preacher being the Rev. S. Forrest. In the course of his exhortation he echoed the remark, "I never take my politics into my religion, but I always take my religion into my politics." When this is worked out in practice, it means that the politicians must not meddle with the clergy, but the clergy must meddle with the politicians. The men of God are to keep a sacred preserve, and every poacher is to be shot at sight.

Harry Alfred Long has been anecdoting. Some of his little stories are published in the Glasgow *Evening Citizen*. One of them is full of true Christian taste. It is about the late Charles Bradlaugh, who cannot now defend himself. Of course, it is an abominable falsehood. But it hardly does to be angry with this old mountebank. He is a notorious liar, and nobody takes him seriously.

The new century is to be inaugurated—and we hope it appreciates the compliment—by a series of "important services" at St. Paul's Cathedral on New Year's Day. But the Catholics don't mean to be left behind. They are getting up a pilgrimage to Rome, where the Pope is to stand in St. Peter's at midnight "during the hour that will attach the twentieth century to the nineteenth." His Holiness is to be surrounded by "representatives from all parts of the Church." No doubt it will be a big show, and will make the poor Protestants look green with envy.

The Rev. John Marsham, writing to the *St. James's Gazette* from Barton Segrave Rectory, Kettering, contends that flogging certain criminals is justifiable even if it does brutalise them, provided it is a means of protection to the helpless and weak. The reverend gentleman does not stop to ask himself whether brutalising a criminal, and then turning him loose upon society again, is really any sort of protection to anybody. We should say that the presumption would be all the other way. Nor does the reverend gentleman propose to extend flogging to women, who are sometimes more brutal to "weak and helpless" children than are the worst of men.

John Smith, of Trinity-street, Southwark, is a leather dresser. He is also a street preacher, especially to children, whom he appears to take into a corner for the purpose of imparting to them "certain truths." A number of mothers in the district are not at all in love with his method of instruction, and some of them kicked up a row, which resulted in an "assault" being committed upon the preacher by a "powerful" bystander named Mark Shaw. Magistrate Slade sentenced the assaulter to forty shillings or a month. This was received with marks of disapproval by several Borough matrons at the back of the Court.

Rev. W. Graham has been fined at Wilmslow for riding a bicycle on the footpath. He claimed that he was privileged as a parson attending to his parochial duties; which really means that a man of God should ride where and how he likes. Happily the magistrates took the view that laymen had as good rights in the public thoroughfares as the clergy.

It is suggested by R. Hannell, in the *Daily News*, that, if missionaries must go to China, they should leave their wives and children at home; or, better still, take and practise the vow of celibacy. But this will not suit the Protestant missionaries, who are too fond of their comfort. Their idea of martyrdom is a good salary, a good position, and pleasant domestic surroundings.

Moody's successor at Northfield is to be the Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, Congregationalist, of Tollington Park, London. This gentleman has refused other offers that would have removed him from his present congregation; but he recognises this as "a clear call from God." Why, certainly. It is always a clear call from God when it fits in with the minister's wishes and ambitions.

The late Lord Bute's heart is probably by this time buried in secret on the Mount of Olives. A family party went out to place it there, accompanied by the Catholic Bishop of Galloway, who would hardly trouble himself about any portion of the corpse of a poor believer. "It is desired," we read, "that the spot where his lordship's heart is buried should remain unknown to the world." Well, the family need not worry. The world is not likely to exhibit much curiosity as to the whereabouts of Lord Bute's heart, or liver, or anything else that was his.

Say what is Honor? 'Tis the finest sense
Of justice which the human mind can frame,
Intent each lurking frailty to disclaim,
And guard the way of life from all offence,
Suffered or done. —*Wordsworth.*

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 25, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "Lord Rosebery's 'Divine Finger.'"

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

WE have received a long letter, written on both sides of the paper, from W. H. Nash—the correspondent who accused us of falsification and other things in relation to the *Annals* of Tacitus. He now admits that the charge of falsification is untenable, but he evades an apology by pretending that falsification need not be "intentional." The rest of his letter is of the same pettifogging and contemptible character, and we will not waste our space, and insult our readers, by printing it. We shall be happy to discuss the Tacitus question with a reputable controversialist. It is idle to discuss with one who answers what we never said, and who seems incapable of understanding our language, or even his own.

F. MALSMJO.—There is nothing to prevent the Salvation Army from holding meetings and "begging," as you call it, in the streets. They call it "collecting." They are within the law.

W. PUGH.—Much obliged. See "Acid Drops." Send on the report by all means.

D. FRANKEL.—Miss Vance has told us what happened. See "Sugar Plums." Thanks all the same.

G. PORTER.—You should not have put the cap on. How on earth could it be meant for you?

A. D.—See Genesis xiv. 18, and Hebrews vii. 1, for Melchizedek.

J. TITHERINGTON.—Thanks for your letter and cuttings.

W. H. MOORE.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

F. E. WILLIS.—Glad to have your cuttings. We share your hope for Mr. Percy Ward's success.

EMANUEL HOPES.—Our interest is in "Secular Education." You say nothing about this in your address to the School Board electors in Marylebone. How, then, can we invite our friends to plump for you? We should have been glad to do so had it been possible.

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always welcome.

J. STANLEY.—We have answered your letter by post, as the case seemed urgent. We wish, however, that all whom it concerns would take a note of the matter. The law, as laid down by Mr. Justice Collins, is this. Sunday Lectures and Concerts—and Christmas Day counts as a Sunday—are legitimate, even with a charge for admission, provided there are *some* free seats. We believe that Mr. Justice Collins's judgment would be upheld, but, of course, we are not sure.

MINNIE and WILLIE HUTTY write to Mr. Neale: "My mamma is a great reader of your esteemed friend Mr. Foote's *Freethinker*. A few weeks ago appeared an article in it entitled 'Echoes from Olympus,' by yourself. Do you think you can write some 'Echoes' and oblige a little girl and boy?"

G. T. HALL (Hull).—Sorry to hear the bigots are now trying to get your Branch turned out of St. George's Hall. Perhaps it would be prudent not to distribute any more of your bills at other meetings there. It is sometimes better to bend than to break.

W. MUMBY.—See paragraph in "Sugar Plums." We shall push the Fund again, and vigorously too.

MEMBERS of the Tir-Phil and New Tredegar Branch are earnestly invited to attend a meeting at "Bon Marche" Buildings, Tir-Phil, on Monday evening, November 26.

J. RANKIN asks whether Mr. Watts will answer the letter from C. Vaughan in the *Freethinker* of October 21.

C. W. HECKETHORN.—You see the Spiritualists are sore already.

J. DAVIDSON.—Your letter shall be considered.

A. J. WHITE.—It is a little out of our way—is it not?

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Mrs. B. E. Marks, £1; A Lady Friend (per J. G. Bartram), 10s.

SHILLING WEEK.—Mrs. B. E. Marks, 5s.; R. Lancaster, 2s.; W. Robinson, 5s.

E. R. WOODWARD.—Miss Vance says that a contents-sheet has been forwarded regularly to your newsagent. Perhaps he repents his promise.

G. E. PEARCE.—Wallace's *Darwinism* is the best single volume we know. It is published at 7s. 6d. Aveling's *Darwin Made Easy* (1s., at our office) is a good compendium.

J. G. DOBSON.—In our next.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Acknowledged as desired.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Two Worlds—Torch of Reason—Light—Leeds Mercury—Glasgow Herald—Boston Investigator—Freethought Magazine—Huddersfield Chronicle—Ethical World—Truthseeker (New York)—Glasgow Evening Citizen—Lucifer—Rhondda Leader.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE had a capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. Mr. Samuels occupied the chair, and there were several questions and some discussion after the lecture. This evening (Nov. 25) Mr. Foote speaks again from the same platform. His subject will be "Lord Rosebery's 'Divine Finger.'" Freethinkers should try to give special publicity to this lecture amongst their friends and acquaintances. It will be physical, geographical, historical, and economical, as well as anti-religious.

Mr. Foote has to "apologise" for the delay of his promised statement concerning Shilling Week and the Twentieth Century Fund. No doubt he will be able to present it in next week's *Freethinker*, and also a full list, up to date, of the direct subscribers. The truth is, he has been very busy, seeing the *Almanack* through the press, and arranging (with Miss Vance) the new courses of lectures in London. The second matter has been one of great difficulty. Other pressing business has also crowded in, including the preparation for the Annual General Meeting of the Secular Society, Limited.

The *Secular Almanack*, issued by the Executive of the National Secular Society, and edited (as a labor of love) by Mr. G. W. Foote, is now on sale. Of course we mean the 1901 number. It is really a cheap publication. "Chilperic's" article alone is worth all the money—and more. It contains information which every Freethinker should keep constantly by him. There are other articles by G. W. Foote, C. Watts, C. Cohen, Mimnermus, A. B. Moss, and W. Heaford; besides a well-stocked Calendar, and a mass of facts about Freethought Societies in all parts of the world. Whatever profit accrues from the sale of this publication goes into the N. S. S. exchequer, to be spent on Freethought organisation and propaganda. That should be enough to clear out every copy of the *Almanack* before Christmas.

Members of the Secular Society, Limited, will have received legal notice of the Annual General Meeting, which is to be held at the Manchester Hotel on Friday evening, November 30, at 8 o'clock. A report and a balance-sheet accompany the notice, and will probably be published later on in the *Freethinker*. Proxy forms have also been sent to members. These should be filled in and forwarded to the Society's registered office, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C., at least two days before the meeting. Those who wish to place their votes in Mr. Foote's hands will insert his name as their proxy. Those who prefer someone else will insert another name.

The Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, consisted of twelve members; but Mr. George Ward resigned in consequence of his inability to attend, and Mr. Forder fell out by virtue of the Society's Articles. Of the ten members left one-third had to retire by ballot. This was three, as near as possible; no Director consenting to be sliced into thirds. The lot fell upon Messrs. Foote, Hartmann, and Warren, who stand, and are eligible, for re-election.

A sixpenny edition of Paine's *Age of Reason*, well printed on good paper, has never been placed on the market. But it is going to be. The Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, considered the suggestion from the Chairman at the last meeting, and resolved to issue the *Age of Reason* at the same price as the cheap novels which are commanding such a large sale. Wealthy people can buy as much expensive heresy as they please. There is plenty for them in the booksellers' shops. What is wanted is cheap heresy for the million, and this projected edition of Thomas Paine's masterpiece will be a bold step in that direction. This is to some extent a propagandist effort, and rightly devolves upon the Secular Society, Limited. But there is good reason to believe that the Society will, in the long run, be more than

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recouped for the outlay, as the sale of the volume should run into tens of thousands.

This is to be called "The Twentieth Century Edition" of the *Age of Reason*. Mr. Foote has undertaken to supply a Biography of Thomas Paine, and such Notes as seem necessary (but no more) after the lapse of a hundred years and in the light of present-day Biblical criticism.

The Secular Society, Limited, has voted a grant of two guineas in aid of the expenses of each "Secular Education" candidate in the London School Board elections—Messrs, Barwick (Finsbury), Hewitt (Tower Hamlets), Jones (Chelsea). and Quelch (East Lambeth). It is to be hoped that Secularists will plump for these candidates in those divisions.

Mr. F. G. Jones, B.A., The Trade Unionist and "Secular Education" candidate in Chelsea, said at a recent meeting, as reported in the local *Advertiser*, that "By secular education it was not to be supposed that he wished to substitute the doctrine of Mr. G. W. Foote, of Freethought fame, although many persons would probably between now and the election say that is what he did intend to do. He held that the churches and the chapels were the places for religious instruction, and the schools of the Board for secular instruction; that is, such instruction as will fit them for the future citizenship of this great Metropolis." The reference to Mr. Foote is not too neat, but Mr. Jones is sound enough substantially.

On Wednesday evening, November 28, the night before the poll, Mr. Watts is to speak on behalf of Mr. Barwick's candidature in Finsbury, at the Wordsworth-road Board school, Stoke Newington.

On Monday evening (Nov. 26) Mr. Cohen delivers the second of the course of free lectures at the Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street, Islington. The local "saints" should do their best to fill the hall—if possible with Christians.

The Aldgate Baths experiment was not a striking success at the first venture. Miss Vance went down there from the Athenæum Hall, arriving about 8 o'clock, in company with Mr. Leat, and found the door, which was barred on the inside, surrounded by a howling mob of young male and female Hooligans, many of whom were obviously Jews, who displayed a quite astonishing interest in Jesus Christ. Mr. Leat had to fight his way to the door, Miss Vance following him, and getting her clothes torn in doing so. When they could persuade those inside to open the door a little, they crept in amidst a shower of biscuit tins, oily sardine boxes, and other unmentionable articles. Inside they found a small, nondescript gathering, whom Mr. Cohen had been trying to address. No doubt a good many intending auditors had been kept out by the barred door and the disgusting mob in the street. Unfortunately, it had not occurred to anyone to send for the police. This was done by Miss Vance, and the Hooligans were cleared off, after one constable had been badly hurt on the knee with a brickbat. This evening (Nov. 25) police will be engaged to keep order at the door all the time, young boys and girls will not be admitted, and walking about in the hall will not be allowed. Mr. Charles Watts is the lecturer, and we call upon the East London "saints" to rally round him. For the rest, it must be distinctly understood that the *arrangements* will be in Miss Vance's hands—absolutely. She knows what should be done, and discipline is necessary to counteract disorder.

We understand that Mr. Cohen, who stuck to his post, with his chairman, Mr. Victor Roger, got through his lecture, although by instalments; and that he was opposed by the Rev. Mr. Alcock in a very gentlemanly manner.

The Paddington Public Baths, Queen's road, Bayswater, close to Whiteley's, has been engaged for one week-night, Tuesday, December 4. Other nights have to be determined later. Mr. Foote will take this first night himself. His subject will be "Secularism and the Bible." Handbills of this meeting can be obtained of Miss Vance, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court; or of Mr. B. Munton, 10 Uxbridge-road, Notting Hill.

Application has been made for the Battersea Public Baths on Sunday evenings, December 2, 9, and 16. We expect to make a definite announcement next week.

The *Midland Free Press* gave a brief, but bright, report of Miss Goyne's lecture on the late Grant Allen in the Leicester Secular Hall. Miss Goyne is a Birmingham schoolmistress, and a member of the local N. S. S. Branch. Londoners will remember her pleasantly as one of the speakers at the fine Queen's Hall meeting after the N. S. S. Whit-Sunday Conference.

Characteristics of St. Mark.

The Second Gospel deserves attentive study, for it is now generally admitted to be the earliest of the four. It is called the Evangel "according to St. Mark"; but who Mark was nobody knows. Two or three persons of that name occur in other parts of the New Testament, but there is nothing to show that any of them wrote this Gospel. In the Acts we have mention of John surnamed Mark, and of Mark plain and simple. Now, scholars of every shade of opinion are agreed that the Acts of the Apostles was written *after* the Gospel of St. Luke, and that St. Luke's Gospel was written *after* Mark's. Therefore, if John surnamed Mark, or plain and simple Mark, had either of them written any Evangel, then it would certainly have been known to Luke at the time he composed the Acts; and it is incredible that he should have omitted to mention the fact if he had known it.

It is usually stated, on the authority of the ancient fathers, that Mark was a disciple of St. Peter, and that he wrote his Gospel in Rome, appealing to 1 Peter v. 13 (which, by the way, does not mention Rome at all, but Babylon; and which does not speak of a disciple, but a son). Eusebius says that Papias wrote that Prester John told him that Mark composed his Gospel from the preaching of Peter. This succession of names recalls the narrative of the *House that Jack Built*, but it is all that orthodoxy can tell us of the composition of the Gospel under consideration; and, in fact, it is quite useless to refer to these ancient fathers, for they can give us no information as to the personality of the Evangelist Mark, or his qualifications or trustworthiness in dealing with matters of history.

Now, the Gospel of Mark is written in Greek. But it contains several Syriac words and several Latin words. The Evangelist is careful to translate his Syriac, but does not think it in the least necessary to explain his Latin. In vi. 27 a soldier of the bodyguard is called a *speculator*—a word which does not convey any military meaning to us, but which in Latin meant a scout or sentinel. In vii. 4 the word translated "pots" is a corruption of the Roman measure, the *sextarius*. We are actually informed in v. 9 that the devils in Galilee spoke Latin, and called themselves "Legion"! Not to mention such words as *denarius*, *centurion*, *pretorium*, etc., which are likewise found in the other gospels.

But, although Mark expected his readers to be perfectly acquainted with Latin, he did not suppose that they understood Syriac. In orthodox commentaries we usually find it stated that "Mark has preserved a few words in the mother-tongue of Jesus." But the learned commentators carefully avoid discussing whether Mark himself really understood Syriac. In the time of St. Jerome it had already been pointed out that the Evangelist was often incorrect, and Jerome was obliged to argue that "Maiden, I say unto thee arise" was merely a free translation, as opposed to a literal rendering, of *Talitha cumi*. *Ephphatha*, again, is unintelligible. It should have been *Ithpethach*. Golgotha should be *gogoltha*. And what shall we say of x. 46? The word *bar* means "son" in Syriac, so that *Bar Timæus* would mean "son of Timai." Yet Mark is so ignorant of the rudiments of the language that he actually writes "the son of Timæus, Bartimæus," without recognising the identity of the two phrases. It is still more important to observe that, when Christ on the Cross cries out *eloi eloi lama sabachthani*, Mark implies that the bystanders did not understand him; so that it is perfectly evident that the Evangelist was of opinion that Syriac was *not* spoken at Jerusalem; or, in other words, that the alleged "mother-tongue of Jesus" was unknown in the land of his birth.

But the reader may inquire why Mark took the trouble to insert these unintelligible words in his Gospel and make such a parade of their interpretation. The answer is simple. They are magical formulæ. At *Talitha cumi* the dead arises. At *Ephphatha* the eyes of the blind are opened. At *Eloi lama sabachthani* Jesus miraculously gives up the ghost; for death by crucifixion did not usually supervene for two or three days. Similarly *Abba*, *Boanerges*, and *Golgotha* are all mystic titles, like

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the Syriac and Coptic words found on the Gnostic gems and in early Christian formulas of exorcism. It has often been remarked that this Gospel is almost entirely occupied with narratives of the miracles wrought by the supernatural powers of Christ; and, while we are on this subject, it should be remarked that xiv. 3 speaks of Jesus being anointed with "pistic nard," concerning which, it is amusing, if not instructive, to read the marginal note in the Revised Version; for *pistis* means "faith." It is by *pistis* that the followers of Christ are to heal the sick, handle serpents, cast out devils, and remove mountains. So that *Pistic Nard* was evidently a composition of magical efficacy, and that was why it was used as the chrism of the Christos.

It is not clear whether St. Mark possessed any intimate knowledge of the geography of Palestine, as his mention of localities does not present any definite features. It is true that in viii. 10 he speaks of Dalmanutha, which is otherwise totally unknown, and which in Matthew is replaced by Magadan (or Magdala in some MSS.); but it is somewhat hypercritical to insist on such a fact, seeing that, after all, our own knowledge of the geography of Galilee is by no means complete.

But if we cannot decide anything about his knowledge of geography, we can at least decide upon his knowledge of Jewish history; for he knew little or nothing about it. In ii. 26 he cites Abiathar instead of Ahimelech (see 1 Samuel xxi. 1), and the Authorised Version attempts to wriggle out of the difficulty by inserting "in the days of" Abiathar. In vi. 14–29 he continually calls Herod the Tetrarch a "king"; and it is noteworthy that Matthew, in copying this narrative, silently corrects the mistake by writing "tetrarch," except in Matthew xiv. 9, where the word "king" is retained by an oversight.

If Mark was unfamiliar with Jewish history, he was also unfamiliar with Jewish customs, and thinks it necessary to explain them at length whenever he has occasion to mention them. Thus in vii. 1–5 we have a statement about the ceremonial ablutions of the Jews. In xii. 18 he thinks it necessary to inform his readers that the Sadducees said there was no resurrection. In xiv. 1 we are told that the Passover was the feast of unleavened bread; in xv. 42, that the Preparation was the day before the Sabbath. All these labored explanations reveal the fact that the author was not a Jew, and that Jewish customs were foreign to him and to his prospective readers.

In style Mark is somewhat theatrical. He is continually striving to be vivid. And, as is usual in uneducated people, in striving for vividness he is often ridiculous. In vi. 39 he tells us the people sat upon the *green* grass, as though anyone expected grass to be red. In vii. 26 he tells us that Christ met "a Greek, a Syro-Phenician by birth." If the woman were a Greek, she could not have been a Syro-Phenician; and, therefore, the Revisers have a marginal note to the effect that Greek meant "Gentile," oblivious of the fact that when Mark wishes to mention a Gentile he used an entirely different word, as anyone may see by referring to x. 33. A Syro-Phenician was a Phenician of Syria, as distinguished from a Libyo-Phenician, or Phenician of Africa or Carthage; so that "Syro" is a redundancy in Syria. In iv. 36 we are told that there followed him other little ships. In the same way, in xiv. 51 we have the famous young man in the linen garment, who has exercised the minds of generations of commentators who have not recognised that this is one of Mark's usual irrelevancies which are intended to be graphic, and lend an additional air of reality to the scene. These irrelevant touches are omitted in the parallel passages of Matthew and Luke.

The date of the Gospel seems to be very clear, for xiii. 2 points conclusively to the destruction of the Temple by Titus in A.D. 70. On the other hand, xiii. 30 shows that Mark expected the Second Advent to take place in the lifetime of some of those who had heard Jesus preach; and in xv. 21 he mentions Simon of Cyrene as the father of two well-known persons—Alexander and Rufus. Both these latter names appear in the Epistles of Paul; but of course there is no certainty that they represent the same persons. At any rate, Mark must have been conversant with the generation after Jesus, so that we shall probably be justified in placing his Gospel between A.D. 70 and A.D. 100.

We have already remarked that Mark is the eldest of the Evangelists; and our survey of him would be very incomplete if we failed to notice his omissions—or, rather, the additions that the later writers make to the Gospel story. In the first place, Mark knew nothing of the alleged virgin birth or regal genealogy of Jesus; because, if he had heard of these, there was no reason why he should have omitted them. Then, again, Mark was quite ignorant of the details of the temptation in the wilderness; for, again, it is incredible that he should have left them out if he had known them. Several things in Mark are evidently the germs of later amplifications. One of the most striking is xiv. 57, 58. The statement that Jesus would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days is there treated by Mark as a falsehood concocted by his enemies. Yet in John ii. 19 this same phrase has become a part of Christ's teaching. What is described as a falsehood in one evangelist is narrated as an observed fact in another. But the omission which is most noteworthy is the alleged teaching of Jesus. Modern controversialists are always raving about the Sermon on the Mount, and what they vainly suppose to be the novel doctrines of Jesus. St. Paul's Epistles know nothing of these sayings of Jesus. Mark's Gospel knows nothing of these teachings. They first appear in the Gospel of St. Matthew, which is nothing more than Mark, augmented with a lot of fresh matter. The Evangel of St. Mark merely presents Jesus of Nazareth as a somewhat bumptious individual performing sundry wondrous feats, and asserting his superiority over Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and the like; and the relation of this Gospel to Matthew and Luke should be carefully studied by those who wish to comprehend the process by which the Christ story was gradually evolved.

CHILPERIC.

Freethought in France.

AMONG the symptoms of the decay of religion in France is the constant leakage going on within the Church, whereby many of its most honest representatives are drifting away into the great stream of that world-wide sceptical movement which is destined to submerge all the creeds and gods in ruin and destruction. In one of the smallest dioceses of France—that of Marseille—alone, no less than twenty priests are known to have plunged out of the Ark of God into the surrounding waters of unbelief during the first half of the present year; but throughout the country the number of those who made public their relinquishment of the priestly office is small as compared with the number of those who make no public announcement of their disgust and contempt for the creed which formerly they preached, but quietly leave the Church to its fate. One of the chief apostles of Freethought in France—Monsieur Victor Charbonnel—only recently ministered at the altars of the Great Lying Church—that Church whose lies are white as compared with the blackness of its innumerable murders. Some of the priests who have found the light do not hide it under the bushel of obscurity. Many of them, before quitting the sacred show, address a stinging letter of renunciation of religion to their several bishops. In some cases they read out their valedictory letter to their congregation, and at the same time ask pardon of their parishioners for having confirmed them so long in superstition. M. Charbonnel's letter, which was addressed to the Archbishop of Paris, was reproduced in nearly all the French journals, and its publication had the effect of a weighty manifesto, inasmuch as more than thirty priests quickly imitated his courageous example, and left the Church. M. Charbonnel has since been active as a propagandist throughout France and Belgium, and was one of the clearest heads and cleverest speakers at the recent Paris Congress of International Freethought. He is immensely popular wherever he goes, and counts for one of the great personal forces of Freethought in both countries, where his labors are so highly appreciated.

This sceptical process within the Church is helping forward the popular aggressive movement outside. The organised Freethought Party in France to-day is widely distributed over the country, and hundreds of local

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societies exist, principally in the towns and large centres of population. From a detailed list, now before me, of these societies, published in the *Almanack* for 1894 issued by the French Federation of Freethought, it would appear that no less than 570 Freethought groups or societies, many of them aggressively active, are, in their different localities, carrying on the work of rescuing humanity from the ravening wolves of superstition. I find that in Algeria no less than twenty-eight societies are enumerated, and over thirty groups are placed to the credit of Paris. It is not clear how many of these societies are affiliated to the French Federation, as I read in the annual report, presented last Easter Monday, that the actual number of its Branches is 210, in addition to 260 individuals unattached to societies. The Secretary of the Federation is Monsieur Paul Dobelle, 98 Boulevard de l'Hôpital, Paris.

There are three features in connection with French Freethought which are worthy of special notice, as evidencing the activity and zeal of the members.

I.—*The Good Friday Banquets.* The Catholics make it a special point to eat fish instead of meat on this day, in commemoration of the fishy story of the crucifixion of a Jew who posed as a god. The abstention from butchers' meat is supposed to be specially gratifying to the blessed Trinity, and on that account every good Freethinker in France, even though he be a vegetarian, eats his beef, pork, or mutton on Good Friday in memory of the crucified Lamb. Banquets are organised in the different groups, and the rallying of the friends around the festal board is made the occasion of encouraging speeches and convivial rejoicing. Whilst the Christians monopolise the blessing of mourning on the day when Jesus "died" to make them happy, the Freethinkers eat and drink and make merry, to the great scandal of the godly.

II.—*Civil Marriages.* Special functions organised on the occasion of the union of members of the Freethought bodies do much to redeem the civil ceremony from the charge of coldness. The friends rally round the happy couple at the Town Hall, and speeches of congratulation are delivered by chosen orators. On the most solemn day of one's life the fatal plunge is taken amidst every token of sympathy and respect on the part of one's associates in the work of social redemption, and a distinctively Freethought tone is given to all the ceremonies surrounding the momentous event. There can be no doubt of the wisdom of expelling the cold-blooded red-tapeishness of a frigidly official tying of the matrimonial knot, and of imparting some rational warmth of human feeling into a function whereby society formally recognises the union of two citizens as man and wife.

III.—*Secular Funerals.* Every number of the *Bulletin* (the official organ of the French Freethought Federation) records some imposing mark of respect paid by the groups on the occasion of the burial of one or other of its members. Under the French law every citizen is guaranteed the right of making a testamentary declaration determining whether his or her burial shall be of a civil or of a religious character, and penalties are imposed for any infraction of such testamentary disposition, save only when such disposition shall, for special and well-understood reasons, be set aside by the legal authorities. These Secular funerals really partake, sometimes, of the nature of big Freethought demonstrations. I take one out of fifty similar cases before me at the present moment. At Valenciennes, on August 5 this year, a large crowd gathered to pay the last tribute of respect to the memory of Madame Emilie Pavot, the Secretary of the local Freethought Society, and wife of one of the most active Freethought speakers in that part of the country. The funeral *cortège*, consisting of 2,500 people, marched solemnly to the cemetery, led by the bearers of the flags and banners of several Freethought societies. Floral crowns and wreaths, presented by different groups, were borne on the bier. Delegates from more than thirteen Secular societies, and a delegation from a local anti-clerical boarding school, besides those from several other special bodies, preceded the funeral car, and, on arriving at the final resting place of the deceased, one of the members delivered a touching address, full of dignity and quiet pathos. Judging from the verbatim report, I should imagine that the address must have created a deep impression on the mind of the large and sympathetic crowd which gathered around the open grave. The French Freethinkers are not, I think, unwise in thus making public and impressive display of their love for the worthy dead who have finished their life's labors, and so manifesting their devotion to the principles which inspired the fortitude and sacrifices so often involved by the open profession of anti-Christian beliefs. Each such demonstration we make of the solidarity of our sympathy on occasions, either of great personal joy or sorrow, unifies and strengthens the force of that growing volume of enlightened public opinion which shall ultimately sweep away the immoral stupidities of the Christian superstition.

Limits of space enjoin me to be brief, otherwise I should like to linger over the "Feast of Childhood and Adolescence," or (so-called in certain localities) the "Feast of Youth." I referred to a similar institution as existing in Freethought Switzerland in my article of November 18. In Belgium, too, the "Feast of Youth" largely flourishes. These *fêtes* are designed with the view of preventing the rising generation, sons and daughters of Freethinkers, from drifting away from the principles of Freethought through the mere indifference or want of organisation of Freethinkers themselves. The Church has recognised that men, and especially children, are gregarious animals having a sentimental as well as a sanctimonious side to their nature, and these *fêtes* seem admirably adapted to initiate the dawning mind of the young into an ever-growing understanding of the great social and personal interests underlying the doctrine of Freethought. I propose later on to devote a special article to these and similar institutions in connection with continental Freethought.

The French Freethought party has worthy speakers in its ranks; but its cry goes up for more and more lecturers, to meet the wants of its numerous Branches. Several of its clever and eloquent orators were present at the recent Paris Congress. The women are as zealous, as fiery, and as learned as the best men amongst them. The emancipated priest, too, is on the war-path, brandishing the intellectual tomahawk over the heads of the faithful. Charbonnel is not the only priest who recently has flung down the altar and derided the gods. The ex-Father Duhamel declares that, since he has divested himself of the sacerdotal garb, the whole business appears to him a piece of criminal buffoonery.

Many priests are now awakening to this truth. During the last two years more than three hundred French priests have left Rome for Rationalism. Whilst M. Charbonnel was studying as a priest at Saint Sulpice thirty-five priests confided to him that they had lost their faith. Most of these still remain in the Church—liars ministering at the altar of lies; but the day cannot be far distant when a Church whose prophets are self-consciously the apostles of imposture must crumble to the ground by the mere weight of its own frauds and crimes. All the Churches to-day are similarly honey-combed with unbelief—so much so that no one knows whether it is an honest fool or a dishonest knave who is speaking the inspired platitudes of the pulpit. The salvation of France against pious fool and pious knave alike will spring, not from Rome nor Judæa, not from a dead Christ nor a living priest—for all these represent and embody the slavish superstitions and holy crimes of the past—but from that healthy humanistic spirit of scepticism which breathes through the writings of a Rabelais or a Voltaire, and became incarnate in the lives of many a hero and martyr of progress and Freethought.

William Heaford.

"Mother," said a sick girl, "'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth'; is that so?" "That is, what Paul wrote," replied the mother. "Well, the Lord must love me, then, for he is just giving me fits."

"I know all about you," remarked the detective, with absolute conviction, to the unfortunate cashier he had been called in to interrogate; "you are a Sunday-school superintendent, and a most regular attendant at church." "Heavens! How did you find that out?" gasped the unfortunate one. "Easily," remarked Hawkshaw, in a superior manner; "your accounts are short."

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Correspondence.

THAT WHALE STORY ONCE MORE!

"He lies like Genesis."—JEZEBEL PETTIFER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—No doubt a sperm whale *could* have swallowed Jonah, since the arnis of squid, thirty feet long, and thicker than a man's body at their widest part, have—*vide* Herman Melville, Mr. Bullen's great forerunner and master—been taken from the stomach of captured sperm whales. The "right whale, however, would be choked were he to try to swallow a penny roll." Still, sperm whales are unknown in the Mediterranean. However, granting the necessary sperm whale—and *what* would not one grant to so excellent a lie as the Jonah chestnut?—at the necessary spot at the necessary moment of time, and granting that Jonah really succeeded in joining the *squids arnis* and other consominations in the intestines of the whale, and granting that the action of the poor whale's gastric juices was stayed and Jonah left unassimilated; and granting, too, that he was not crushed to death in the poor animal's attempt to get on with its digestive business; granting, also, that Jonah was able to live without air of *any* kind, to say nothing of fresh air; granting, indeed, everything else that can be granted in reference to Jonah's three days' residence at the whale's centre of digestion, there still remains a little problem which, although that whale *may* have solved it, yet requires to be solved by us. The sperm whale, we grant, then, has got Jonah safe in his digester, and got him there in the neighborhood of Joppa, in the Mediterranean. How is he to spew up Jonah at Nineveh on the Tigris within seventy-two hours? His only route is *viâ* Malta, Gibraltar, the Gold Coast, the Cape of Good Hope, Zanzibar, and the Persian Gulf. This route, at a modest computation, would involve the whale in the record run of some 350 miles an hour, without any interval for refreshment or meditation, for 72 consecutive hours. On reaching the Tigris, however, that whale would have a still bigger job on hand—or on flipper? The Tigris would not float him, so he'd have to *walk* to Nineveh to deliver Jonah as per address and instructions! Would that whale, after sprinting at the rate of 350 miles an hour for seventy-two hours on end, be in a fit condition to undertake a walking tour, I ask? Where were the local inspectors of the S. P. C. A., I'd like to know, if the whale did try to walk? Any whale, no matter how big, caught trying to walk, say from Chelsea to the Strand, even without a tummy full of live prophet, would be incontinently arrested for attempted suicide! No, sir; I believe that whale story up to a point; I believe the sperm whale swallowed Jonah without first masticating him, and without after digesting him; that Jonah lived without air for seventy-two hours, and resisted all the efforts of the whale's intestines to crush him ready for digestion; that the whale did that 350 miles an hour—on his head, so to speak—for seventy-two hours on end; for all these things I could do myself with the requisite means; but I don't believe in that walk of the whale to Nineveh; like the Scotchman, "I'm a bit of a leer, my sen," and you can't expect me to believe everything. The German's idea, that "the whale" was a "pub," and that Jonah drank there for three days until, drunk and penniless, he was chucked out by the barman, is too natural to be worthy of belief by any self-respecting liar. R. R.

THOSE BIGOTS!

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The reason Mr. F. Wood and myself were defeated at the recent Borough Council Election was that we were the victims of a Christian conspiracy, all the more odious because it was carried on by the very people who were represented at the meeting where we were adopted as candidates long before the election took place. We were well known as Freethinkers, and had been returned before at previous elections. But we had committed the unpardonable sin of voting in favor of our Public Baths being let to the National Sunday League on Sunday evenings. Two Independent Progressives (!) (a Baptist parson and a rabid Sabbatarian) were nominated at the last moment, and we had also the misfortune to have a reverend Wesleyan parson added to our Progressive list, to fill a vacancy. The list consisted of three Wesleyans, one Free Churchman, and two Infidels. Meanwhile a *United Manifesto* had been issued by the "Christian Stalwarts," "Free Church Council," "Christian Endeavorers," etc., recommending as men of sterling character a list of candidates in each ward. Singularly enough, in every other ward but "Bishop's," the list was identical with the Progressive list, who were all Bethelites, or reputed to be so; but in our ward they had taken *four* from the Progressive list, and the two Independent Sabbatarian Progressives. A circular was also issued, stating that, in voting for the Sunday League, "Messrs. Wood and Roger voted for Sunday labor."

The result of it all was that, partly on account of the Progressive list containing a Wesleyan parson, partly on account of the "United Manifesto," an active canvass was carried on among the Bethelites, which resulted in an extraneous vote of about 250 being brought into the field; so that, while my colleague and I polled more than the usual party vote, the two Independent Sabbatarians had polled enough votes to keep us out, and also from being at the top of the poll. They afterwards boasted that they had done what they were put up for—viz., "knocked Roger and Wood out." With these people nearly nine years of solid work on the Lambeth Vestry, during which time I had filled many important positions, counted for nothing. Belief in a world I did not know was better than working for this world, which I did know something about. V. ROGER.

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As your paper is open to discussion on important matters, permit me very briefly to say, you mistake the Old Testament doctrine on human sacrifice as much as I did the marriage views of the Secular Society. Thus, in this week's article, on "Jephthah's Daughter," you say "Jephthah's fulfilment of his vow was in accord with the text in Leviticus (xxvii. 28-9)." Your view is that he burned his daughter in sacrifice—an idea I have no wish to controvert, as you candidly say many think he only devoted her to virginity.

But I wish to state this passage cannot refer to human sacrifice; first, because the only kinds of animals to be sacrificed are expressly given by Moses; and, second, because the entire Old Testament denounces human sacrifice (see, for example, Deuteronomy xii. 31 and Jeremiah vii. 31). Persons in the text you quote given as "devoted" were criminals set solemnly for death by responsible authority. Such are in Deuteronomy xx. 17, where the margin gives "devote"; or Joshua vi. 17, where we read Jericho and its people were "devoted" (Revelation's version is quoted in each case). Numbers xxi. 2, 3 is similar, or 1 Samuel xv. 3. This "devoting" could not be enacted capriciously by any individual; and if Jephthah acted thus, he was very ignorant.

Professor Soury is all wrong in saying, "Like Moloch, Jahveh claims his first-born." Moloch claimed them to be burned; Jahveh ordered them to be spared. Thus we read, "All the first-born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem" (Exodus xiii. 13). (REV.) HENRY J. ALCOCK, M.A.

[Mr. Alcock writes as though the Old Testament were all of a piece, whereas it contains many different strata of doctrine, ritual, and ethics. Perhaps it will occur to him, on reflection, that the order to redeem the human firstborn, devoted to the Lord, is itself an indication that they had formerly been sacrificed. Why else should they be redeemed? The redemption, in this case, was clearly blood-money.—EDITOR.]

Public Libraries and Freethought Works.

ONCE more a good opportunity presents itself for Freethinkers to give the public a chance of scrutinising their works. Will they accept it? In the parish of Bow, a short time ago, Mr. Passmore Edwards laid the foundation-stone of a Public Library for the district. All honor, I say, to such benefactors of the human race as men like Mr. Edwards, who devote such valuable assistance to the cause of truth in general, and our cause in particular, in regard to Municipal Libraries. No good work has been accomplished without effort, and it is always best to clamber at the commencement of an institution to obtain its *modus operandi* in respect to our works. At the present day our strength lies in our combination, because men are attracted more towards a number of their class banded together for a special purpose than when there are only a few here and there "crying in the wilderness," as the present state of affairs warrants me in saying. Well, then, can we not join hands now and make some kind of a stir in this sleepy parish of Bow? Letters to the local press, announcement at meetings, distributing Secular literature, talking about our rights in reference to our numerical power, etc., are one or two means of getting Freethought works in the contemplated library. No rushing like a bull at a haystack, but calm, steady action, giving consideration to all concerned, is the acme of procedure, and will procure respect for our principles, even if our endeavors are not crowned with success. Now set to work, ye Freethinkers in London; spare not your powder and shot, but direct it rationally, opportunely, and with your ablest effect. I am willing to do my share; but if I am left in the cold, as I have been in regard to this matter in the Shoreditch Libraries, then our movement suffers, and we will have lost an occasion of rendering such good to mankind that is not often presented. H. R. MARCUS WRIGHT.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing him against copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON.

The Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Lord Rosebery's 'Divine Finger.'"

Aldgate Public Baths (Goulston-street): 7.30, C. Watts, "The Science of Life."

Camberwell (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Mr. B. Hyatt's Elocutionary Recital.

South London Ethical Society (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "State Control of Education."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

Battersea Park Gates: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Freethought in the Nineteenth Century."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen (Northern Friendly Society's Hall); Dec. 1, at 6.30, A. M. Craig, "The Law of Progress."

Birmingham Branch (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, Particulars in *Daily Mail*, Nov. 24.

Chatham Secular Society (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Farcical Comedy in two acts by the Society's Amateur Dramatic Class, "Paul Pry."

Glasgow (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class, Mr. Strathearn; 6.30, A. G. Nostic, "The Ancient Mariner," with lantern illustrations.

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, C. Cohen, "The Significance of Evolution."

Liverpool (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Stanley Jones, "Law and Civilisation."

Manchester Secular Hall (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, R. C. Phillips, "Our Slums."

Newcastle (Westminster Hall, Picton-place): 7, Discussion between Messrs. J. Boyce and Mitchell, "Is there a God?"

Sheffield Secular Society (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): H. Percy Ward—3, "Witches and Witchcraft"; 7, "The Gospel of Secularism." Nov. 26 and 27, Debate between Messrs. Ward and Marklew on Spiritualism, etc.

South Shields (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A reading; 7.30, Important business meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. Cohen, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—November 26, Wellington Hall, Islington.

H. Percy Ward, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—November 25, Sheffield; 26 and 27, Debate at Sheffield. December 9, Manchester; 10 and 11, Debate at Manchester.

THE BEST BOOK

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 48. SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

Conjectures of Theology.

"All doctrines relating to the creation of the world, the government of man by superior beings, and his destiny after death, are conjectures which have been given out as facts, handed down with many adornments by tradition, and accepted by posterity as 'revealed religion.'"—WINWOOD READE.

FROM time to time reports appear of the prosecution of palmists and fortune-tellers, whose offence seems to consist in the fact that they make conjectures as to the future, ostensibly in order to guide the actions, or to satisfy the curiosity, of their clients. It is true they do so for payment, and it is also true that professional theologians, who make conjectures as to the future which are not more reliable, receive payment for *their* services. The palmists and fortune-tellers disavow any intention to "deceive and impose" in the meaning of the Act, just as we suppose the priests would protest that they are acting honestly and in good faith in regard to their prognostications. Surely it is a gross piece of inconsistency on the part of Christians to make what is pretty much the same offence punishable in one class of cases, and perfectly legitimate in another.

What do theologians know about the destiny of man after death more than palmists may predict as to his fortune whilst living? As a matter of fact, the palmist or fortune-teller has more data to go upon to enable a shrewd guess to be made, because from individual observation and adroit questions he may elicit enough upon which to risk conjectures that occasionally come somewhere near the mark. There is, furthermore, the fact that he may base these conjectures as to one individual on his knowledge of what has happened, under like conditions, to others; which is quite impossible to the theologian, who has no knowledge of what has happened to any man after death, except that he crumbles to dust. We decline to accept as evidence anything drawn from any set of "sacred books," because that is hearsay and not knowledge, and is most unreliable hearsay too. Spiritualists assert that they have direct information, and, in fact, absolute knowledge; but their statements are discredited by the vast proportion of theological teachers and their followers, who are therefore reduced to reliance on mere speculation.

The origin or the eternity of the universe, its government by any superior beings, and the possibility of a future life for man, are problems insoluble by our finite faculties, are enveloped in impenetrable mystery, and are deep matters of surmise, about which certainly the theologian knows no more than any other man. Swinburne, in one of his poems, apostrophises thus:—

> Friend, who knows if death, indeed, have life,
> or life have death for goal,
> Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare
> nor skies unroll
> What has been from everlasting,
> Or if aught shall always be.

Still, the theologian is not to be deterred from teaching—as if it were a matter of absolute certainty and something within the range of his own knowledge, and about which there can be no possibility of doubt—that the universe was created and is governed by God, and that man will live hereafter. Even these general statements, bold as they are, do not represent the extent of his presumption. He has a plenitude of detail in regard to all the secrets of the universe. Nothing is hidden from him. He can tell us a vast variety of things not only about the unhistorical past, but the everlasting future.

Then it is that the falsity of theological pretensions is made clear, for the priests of Christendom and of the world at large are in attitudes of most violent antagonism. They disagree upon nearly every point; their teachings are absolutely irreconcilable; and they discount to an amusing degree each other's claims to credence.

Where so much contradiction prevails about what are supposed to be eternal verities, it is obvious that certainty does not exist. Clearly these theological dogmatists of our own country and of other climes are at variance simply because there is no actual knowledge to form the basis of their multifarious and conflicting doctrines. They are indulging in mere conjecture, in fanciful theories and imaginary details.

Conjectures upon the great problems indicated are not blamable in themselves, though human limitations necessarily render them incapable of verification. Perhaps, in some senses, these speculations are not entirely idle and fruitless. They lift the mind from the petty incidents of life, and expand it in the contemplation of the marvels of time and space. Priesthoods may be formed for the exclusive study of these mysteries, though their members might often be better employed, for meditation on the Unknowable is not the main object and aim of life. What Freethinkers *do* object to is the domination of the unproductive priestly caste. For ages they have taken the civilised, and some parts of the uncivilised, world into their grasp; have deluded them with base and malefic superstitions; have robbed them of freedom of thought and independence of action; have elevated themselves to positions which have often been higher than those of kings; and have surrounded themselves with an air of sanctity, dignity, and authority as if, indeed, they were the very salt of the earth. All this on the basis of mere conjectures! Further, they have persecuted with relentless persistency and unexampled cruelty all who have in times past exposed their false and baseless claims.

In the present day these people, who live on surmise and conjecture, and who have built upon their fancies colossal institutions, have discovered that their powers of persecution are practically past, and that a spirit of enlightenment has sprung up which will in time dispose of their occupation altogether. Still, in this country, under modified conditions and the cloak of educational aims, the sacerdotal class contrive to make their influence felt, more or less disadvantageously to the community. They still command a connection with the State, and cajole subsidies from the national exchequer. Throughout the country they, and other priests not of the State Church, have, within the present month, endeavored to capture the control of the public elementary schools. It is safe to say that there would be no limit to clerical aggression in every direction if it were not for the restraining influence of their merely nominal supporters, and most of all the strenuous opposition of Freethought.

FRANCIS NEALE.

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Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ.—III.

So far from being able to make a God talk in character, Marie Corelli cannot even make a clever woman do so. She does, indeed, succeed in making Angela Sovrani a very wonderful painter; but that is an easy performance, as the amazing artist has never to submit to the test of exhibiting. It is a different thing, however, when specimens have to undergo a scrutiny. Take the case of Sylvie Hermenstein, Princesse D'Agramont, a young, beautiful, accomplished, and gifted widow, who is evidently going to get married again before the novel ends—as she does, carrying over her great fortune as well as her lovely person to the comparatively needy Christian Socialist, Aubrey Leigh. This aristocratic lady has written "two witty novels"—of course under a *nom-de-plume*—and these have already "startled the world of Paris." Well, it takes a great deal in that line to "startle" the gay city. But if the lady startles Paris she does not startle us. For the most part her conversation is pretentious commonplace. She, or her creatrix, seems to think that posturing is originality; as the man stood on his head to get fresh views of the world. On a certain occasion, when she might be expected to say something particularly witty and startling, she treats us to the following observations, addressed (by the way) to her horse:—

> "Good Rex! You and your kind never tell lies; and yet you are said to have no souls. Now I wonder why we, who are so mean and cunning and treacherous and hypocritical, should have immortal souls, while horses and dogs who are faithful and kind and honest should be supposed to have none."

This ancient and hackneyed reflection is not calculated to startle Paris. It is not even couched in felicitous language. And where on earth is the wit? Is it anything but downright, truculent vulgarity? The Psalmist said in his haste that all men were liars—perhaps after telling an unsuccessful falsehood himself; and Sylvie Hermenstein, or Marie Corelli, may declare, with an unphilosophical succession of epithets, that both men and women are mean, cunning, treacherous, and hypocritical. Branding them in this way, however, is not exactly witty. It savors less of Lucian than of Diogenes. It even reminds us of the village wit who boasted of his victory over an opponent in a public-house. "Why," he said, "I called him all the names I could think of, till he couldn't hold up his head." Princesse D'Agramont's wit appears to belong, essentially, to the same species.

Marie Corelli's crudity is conspicuously displayed in her account of Angela Sovrani's sketch of "A Servant of Christ, at the Madelene, Paris."

> "Low, beetling brows,—a sensual cruel mouth with a loosely projecting under-lip,—eyes that appeared to be furtively watching each other across the thin bridge of nose,—a receding chin and a narrow cranium, combined with an expression which was hypocritically humble, yet sly,—this was the type Angela Sovrani had chosen to delineate, sparing nothing, softening no line, and introducing no redeeming point,—a type mercilessly true to life; the face of a priest."

Aubrey Leigh calls it "a painful truth, boldly declared." The clever and eloquent Abbé Verniaud quite agrees with the painter in her "estimate of the French priests." Even the great and good Cardinal Bonpré, who is shocked at the first sight of this masterpiece, soon rouses himself and calls it "a really great thing, designed greatly, and greatly executed."

Well now, even a Freethinking critic may tell Marie Corelli, who boasts of being a true Christian, that this is painting with a broom and a slop-pail. Give the Devil his due, says the proverb; and let us be just to priests. The average cleric is not quite so unprepossessing. Sometimes he is a curled and scented lady-killer; the kind of servant of the Lord that was in the mind of the rough old nobleman in King Henry the Eighth's time, who remarked that the king might keep priests from having wives, but he could not keep wives from having priests. We admit that the average priest is below the average member of other educated professions in intellect and force of character. That goes without saying in an age when Christianity is intellectually bankrupt; when its doctrines can only be defended by transparent sophistry and puerile subterfuge. But the common "Servant of Christ" is not the decadent Caliban painted by Angela Sovrani. Such a wretch would be unable to hold the women in the Church for a single hour; and when *they* go, it is good-bye to the whole business. No, the average clergyman, poor fellow, gets his living in the way he does, because he has to live somehow. He is under the necessity of earning his bread. He means no harm to anybody, unless they fall foul of his trade. Then he protects himself, like a snake, a tiger, a rat, a cuttle-fish, or even a goose. The method depends on old inherited instincts and professional traditions. Otherwise he is willing to make himself useful and agreeable. On the whole, he is more a Mary Jane than a designing, desperate villain.

Marie Corelli displays a plentiful lack of knowledge about a good many matters. She is not bound to write on what she does not understand; but this is a scripturient age, and the ordinary lady novelist is ready to tackle almost anything. In one of her former novels, which we reviewed in the *Freethinker*, Marie Corelli undertook to lecture men of science on their duties and shortcomings, and she proved her fitness for the task by referring to atoms as though they could be seen under a microscope. There are also some interesting—perhaps we should say amusing—blunders in *The Master Christian*. France is censured for "having for a time put God out of her national institutions." This is true enough of the United States, for instance, but it is not true of France; for in that country the whole Christian priesthood is supported by the State. France has only put God out of her national institutions in the sense that she has turned the priest out of the elementary public schools. But the self-confidence of Marie Corelli as an international censor is not disturbed by such niceties. She works herself into a perfect fury of prophetical denunciation. She describes Paris as godless, rotten to the core, and doomed to destruction. "Her men are dissolute," we are told, "her women shameless, her youth of both sexes depraved, her laws are corrupt, her arts decadent, her religion dead." "France," we are told again, "is a decaying nation—her doom is sealed!" Evidently our lady novelist does not agree with the great Edmund Burke, who said he did not know how to draw up an indictment against a whole nation. She settles it in a few sweeping sentences; frames the indictment, finds a verdict of guilty, passes sentence, and cheerfully awaits its execution. It is probable, however, that she will have to wait a much longer time than she suspects. France is likely to outlive Marie Corelli, and Paris is likely to be found on the banks of the Seine some centuries after *The Master Christian* has disappeared in Time's wallet of "alms for oblivion."

This self-sufficient lady talks ignorant nonsense about Voltaire. She makes the boy Manuel—who is Jesus Christ, mind—call him "a prophet of evil." But that is only an opinion, and may pass for what it is worth. Cardinal Bonpré goes further. He speaks of Voltaire as one "who scoffed at God." So much for the lady's knowledge of the Patriarch of Ferney. She is ignorant of the fact that Voltaire was a Deist, that he wrote in favor of Theism, that he scolded his Atheistic friends like Diderot and D'Holbach, and that he even declared that if God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him.

Marie Corelli may be excused for not having read Voltaire, though she cannot be excused for boldly misrepresenting him in her ill-conditioned ignorance. But what excuse can she have for not having read the New Testament? She describes it as "a very small book" that "would not take you an hour to read." Good heavens! as the lady said when the ceiling fell. Why, the first book in the New Testament, the Gospel according to Matthew, could not be read intelligently in sixty minutes. And there are three other Gospels, and the Acts, and a lot of Epistles, and the wild and difficult book of Revelation. It would seem that Marie Corelli knows the New Testament as well as she knows Voltaire. She certainly quotes it at times, but the passages she reproduces are familiar ones, which she might have picked up in school or at church. Anyhow, the New Testament cannot be read in an hour; and as she says it can, she clearly does not know what she is talking about.

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But it is time to bring this review to a close, and we have this to say in conclusion. There is only one way of following Christ, and that is by doing what he commanded. The average Christian follows him at a very respectful distance, and just keeps him in sight as a moving dot on the far horizon. Nor are effusive Christians like Hall Caine and Marie Corelli any better. They betray not the slightest intention of pursuing their Master's counsel of perfection. No one is likely to hear of their selling all they have and going snacks with the poor. Mr. Caine made thousands of pounds by his *Christian*, and he has bought a fine mansion with snug grounds in a beautiful part of the Isle of Man, where he carries his cross with exemplary composure. Miss Corelli is apparently going to make still more thousand of pounds by her *Master Christian*, and it is not whispered that she contemplates a great act of renunciation. She will probably stick to all she can get, and her publishers will arise and call her blessed. Yes, it is an easy thing to follow Christ in the modern fashion. He died upon the cross, and some of his loudest eulogists live upon the cross. And as they think of their sentimental mob of readers, they may well exclaim with the worthy Iago, "Thus do I ever make my fool my purse." G. W. Foote.

A Substitute for Christianity.

In suggesting a substitute for the inferior features of Christianity, it should be understood that we adopt the eclectic process—that is, while discarding those parts of the system which have been found to be incompatible with modern requirements, we desire to retain all that is useful in aiding human improvement. I do not suggest that Christianity should be suddenly banished from the world; many of its inculcations, borrowed as they were from the ancient philosophers, can be utilised to-day in regulating the secular affairs of life. When changes are being effected in the conceptions of truth and duty, a study of the slow process of evolution is preferable to the hasty transfer of belief from one thing to another. This is the method in operation at the present time in the realms of thought. Thus we find that many who preach in the name of Christianity have become teachers from their pulpits of truths that bear serviceable fruit in this world, independently of any consideration of a supposed future existence. Forsaking their old practice of urging the necessity of the belief in total depravity, the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb, and hell torments, these advanced preachers dwell upon the goodness and capabilities of human nature, the benefits of self-reliance, and the unreality of the Devil and his fiery abode. So far as this new method has been adopted, secular truths have been substituted for Christian fiction, and rational views of life have taken the place of absurd theological notions.

This marked progress is not the result of spasmodic changes, but is the inevitable consequence of the evolutionary process which is constantly going on around us. The general growth of rational ideas not only changes belief, but it remodels institutions and creates new thoughts as to the nature and destiny of man. We hear much about the attempt to rob people of the consolation of their religion. But, whatever Christians may say to the contrary, the truth is, a faith can only be really consoling while it is believed to be true. That fact, however, does not prevent our trying to convince those whom we think in error that they are so. If we succeed in doing this, there will be no sacrifice of consolation upon the part of those who give up what they have been brought to see is worthless. To change error for truth should not be regarded as a loss, but as a gain. Christians are not too considerate for the feelings of those whom they seek to entice to their ranks from other religions. Devotees of such faiths, if they are sincere in their profession, derive a consolation from their beliefs; but Christians do their best to deprive them of it all the same. Real peace of mind can be secured only through accepting that which is true. Moreover, it is the sincerity of belief and fidelity to what it inculcates that afford genuine consolation, not necessarily the belief itself. Hence Secularists are happy and enjoy a serenity of mind that cannot be surpassed by the most devout religionist. Canon Cheyne aptly stated in a recent sermon that which corroborates the view here set forth. He said: "It contributes greatly to peace of mind to have a compact system of religious doctrines.....but if we treat them as inspired and infallible, we prepare ourselves for many a storm in our inner life, or place ourselves on a level with those undeveloped races which accept without demur whatever forms of doctrine missionaries put before them."

Let those who consider that the removal of Christianity would be a loss pause to reflect in what the "loss" would consist. They would no longer be called upon to believe in some future state of existence under the threat that, if they reject such belief, they will be doomed to "go away into everlasting punishment"; that a God watches over all their actions, like a detective, for the purpose of pouncing upon the first wrong thought or deed, and remembering it against them, in order that in the future a severe punishment may be meted out; that this God created man and woman so that by nature they are necessarily bad, and then threatened them with eternal perdition because they are not good; that man, being unable to save himself, can obtain his salvation only through Christ, yet no one can go to Christ "except the Father draw him"; that a faith is capable of universal application which teaches, "For many are called, but few are chosen"; that, in spite of the difference in organisation, training, and general education, every member of the human family must believe the same thing, or suffer the severest consequences for not doing so; that through prayer diseases can be cured, and the ordinary necessities of life can be obtained; that belief is of more value than conduct; that the Bible contains "God's Word," and should be received as a "divine authority," and as the best guide in human affairs; and, finally, that the most important consideration in life is to endeavor to reach heaven and to avoid hell.

Christianity, which has been professed for centuries, has entirely failed to be of any practical good to mankind. It is, therefore, suggested that these erroneous teachings should be replaced by the inculcation and application of the following facts: That the human family ought to be kept free from the trammels of superstition, and that our first consideration should be the cultivation of our physical and intellectual powers, this being the surest means of promoting honest thought and industrious enterprises, by which the legitimate requirements of body and mind are supplied; that life is governed by fixed laws, and that a knowledge of those laws and obedience thereto are necessary to man's happiness and general well-being; that human effort is indispensable to personal and societarian progress, which has proved of more service in procuring the necessities of existence than all the prayers that were ever uttered; that science has done more for the real comfort and advancement of the people than the theology of all the Churches combined; that morality is far superior to religion as a beneficial factor in daily life; that Christ is *not* the "light of the world," inasmuch as the great majority of the human race have never heard of him, and those to whom his name is familiar do not follow his example or obey his teachings; and that many of the inculcations ascribed to Jesus are quite impracticable and antagonistic to modern requirements. Lecky, in his latest work, *The Map of Life*, admits this. He says:—

> "We should hardly write over the Savings Bank, 'Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow will take thought for itself'; or over the Bank of England, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth,' 'How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God'; or over the Foreign Office, or the Law Courts, or the prison, 'Resist not evil,' 'He that smiteth thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also,' 'He that taketh away thy coat let him have thy cloak also'" (pp. 214-15).

Now, if Christ's teachings are impotent for good in secular duties, where is the utility of Christianity as a reforming agency?

To sum up my answer to the question: What would I offer as an efficient substitute for Christianity? I would erase from the Bible its many objectionable parts and allow whatever is good in it to take its place with useful literature in general. I would substitute for dependence upon religious faith, reliance

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upon cultivated reason; for the providence of heaven, the science of earth; for the divine commands, ethical teachings; for service to God, service to man; for prayer, work; for worship in churches, inculcation of secular truths; for ministers of religion, political and social reforms; and, finally, instead of the useless efforts of preparing for some imaginary future life, I would urge the necessity of persistent striving to better our present existence.

Such are a few of the advantages which Secularism would supply in lieu of the follies and absurdities of the Christian faith. As Secularists, we have no heaven in another world to allure, no hell to appal, and no devil to torture. We urge that it is far better to seek to realise a real "heaven on earth," and to get rid of those shams and superstitions which too often make a "hell upon earth." We teach that vice should be avoided because indulgence in it is a wrong to individuals and to society, and that virtue should be practised because it is the duty of all to do what is possible to alleviate human woe and to assist human progress.

Charles Watts.

Christianity and Civilisation.—I.

The reputed legal maxim, "No case, abuse the plaintiff's counsel," receives peculiar and forceful illustration from the region of Christian apologetics. With the ordinary methods of abuse those who are engaged in Freethought propaganda are only too familiar. That nearly all the great heretics of the past broke with Christianity because its lofty morality was a constant rebuke to their depraved natures, and that all unbelief springs from a certain weakness of character, are commonplaces with the average Christian evidence monger; and even when the better class of these recognise that the day is passing for the fruitful use of such methods, the stories are handed on to a lower order of believers; and one cannot help feeling that their lively use of them excites anything but displeasure in the minds of their former possessors.

But this principle of vilification and misrepresentation reaches much farther than attacks on individuals. It is applied also to nations—even to civilisation. For the purpose of whiting Christianity by contrast, whole civilisations are blackened, history rewritten and miswritten, facts distorted, incidents invented, and the implication suggested, not merely that Christianity has been a factor in the development of the modern world, but that civilisation itself would have disappeared but for the presence of Christianity. And this tendency is, as I have said, pandered to by men whose abilities and whose studies might well have led them to a far different conclusion. Men of the standing of the late Mr. Froude and of Mr. Lecky, to go no farther afield, speak of Christianity as having been a great civilising force, in spite of the facts stated in their own volumes which demonstrate that every organised expression of Christianity has been a steady hindrance to rational development. Such conclusions come dangerously near making history, as Voltaire said, "nothing but a parcel of tricks we play the dead."

But when men in the front rank of modern writers make such statements, people of lesser note may plead some extenuation. Consequently the Rev. Professor Orr, of Edinburgh, who repeated in a recent address in London all the old stories of the evils of pre-Christian civilisation and the benefits conferred on the world by Christianity, may at least plead that he is sinning in good company. Professor Orr's object was to show "what history owes to Jesus Christ" on the "lower plane of moral and social benefit." The "lower plane" is a significant illustration of the bent of the clerical mind, which is, and always has been, ready to subordinate these benefits to the assumed "higher" one of religious extravagance. His method of demonstrating how much the world owes to Jesus is the simple one of claiming that everything that is good came from his teaching. He found a world hopelessly corrupt; he left it the means of regeneration. The Professor says:—

> "Think for a moment of what the world was when Christianity first began to be preached throughout it. It found, as all history will tell you, a pagan world in the last throes of dissolution and decay.....Dissoluteness flooded society. The one duty which was held supreme was allegiance to the State.....There was little sense of individual right. The father, for example, in the family held all power in his own hands, and wives and children and slaves were subject to his absolute authority. Infanticide and exposure of children were common recognised institutions.....The social structure was built on slavery. Half the population of the Empire were slaves; half the population of Rome were slaves.....Women..... had no rights any more than slaves. The favorite amusements of the populace were the sanguinary spectacles of the amphitheatre, the fights of gladiators with wild beasts, or of Christians or others thrown to be devoured by wild beasts in the arena. Marriage had hardly any solidity.....And, worse than all, heathen society had not within itself.....any principle of regeneration.....The codes of the philosophers were without sufficient sanction, and there were not those ideas of the dignity and the worth of the individual man which made it worth while people taking pains and making sacrifices for them."

So much for the condition of the Pagan world as it existed, in the opinion of our clerical Professor. Now for his view of what Christianity accomplished:—

> "It [Christianity] brought a totally new idea of man himself as a being of infinite dignity and immortal worth. .....It brought into the world a new spirit of love and charity, something wonderful in the eyes of these heathens as they saw institutions springing up round about them that they had never thought or heard of in heathenism before. .....It restored woman to her rightful place by man's side as his spiritual helpmeet and equal, and created that best of God's blessings on earth—the Christian home..... It taught the slave his spiritual freedom as a member of the kingdom of God.....and struck at the foundations of slavery by its doctrine of the natural brotherhood and the dignity of man.....It entered as a revolutionising, as a regenerating principle, into that ancient society..... It flashed into men's souls a new moral ideal, and set up a standard of truth and integrity and purity which has acted as an elevating force on moral conception in the world till this hour."

I have given these two lengthy statements from Professor Orr, not because they contain anything new, but because, coming as they do from the head of a theological college, they should carry rather more weight than if they had issued from less responsible quarters. Of course, such special pleadings have been answered almost as frequently as they have been made; but the fact that they are still being repeated renders it necessary to meet constant misrepresentation with constant correction. More particularly is it necessary when some of our leading writers, with a curious impartiality that generally lands them on the wrong side, give a certain sanction to this habit of imposing on the living by playing tricks with the dead. The quotations, moreover, contain so much of the matter in dispute between Christians and non-Christians that a somewhat detailed examination of Professor Orr's statements may serve to clear the air a little—for some, at least.

Let us take, first of all, the general charge of the Roman Empire being in a state of "utter decrepitude and decay." Such statements are easily made, but not quite so easily proved. Briefly, the only reason that can be advanced is the inconclusive one, that the Roman Empire actually did die out. But this obviously proves nothing. It is quite possible that the near future may witness the disappearance of the House of Lords; but it by no means follows that its members are either immoral or in a state of utter decrepitude. The fall of an empire no more proves its corruption than the maintenance of one demonstrates its virtue. It is never safe to trust either wholesale condemnations or laudations of an entire people; the great probability in either case is that we are dealing with writers who look at one side of the picture only. A writer of to-day who gathered together all the unsavory things that might be gathered from the public courts, divorce courts, and gambling hells, and then presented them to his readers as a fair sample of English life, might succeed in showing that "dissoluteness flooded society" here as well as in ancient Rome. Yet this is the manner in which Christian writers have dealt with the first three centuries of the Christian era. Such pictures as those drawn of the pagan world by Christians disprove themselves by their own extravagance. A society so hopelessly corrupt as Roman society is pictured, with marriage, and consequently the home, neglected (although, at the same time, the husband is represented as having power of life and death over his

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family), without anything in the shape of moral teaching worth having (although the people are represented as sacrificing everything to an ideal of civic duty), could not exist for a single century, whereas on the face of it Roman civilisation lingered on until it was forcibly stamped out. As Fustel de Coulanges says: "To say that the Roman Empire perished in consequence of its corruption is to utter one of those senseless phrases which are injurious alike to historic science and to the knowledge of human nature."

It is difficult to deal with general charges of social corruption, inasmuch as they would hold good of almost any society at almost any time. With Professor Orr's statements concerning women, slaves, etc., I shall deal at length later. Meanwhile I venture to say that the careful student of Roman history during the first four or five centuries of this era will discover amongst much evil a far greater amount of good. He will find that the Pagan society that preceded the reign of Christianity was, with all its faults, preferable to that which existed in Christian Europe for over a thousand years. "Few men," says Lecky, "who are not either priests or monks, would not have preferred to live in the best days of the Athenian or of the Roman Republics, in the age of Augustus or in the age of the Antonines, rather than in any period that elapsed between the triumph of Christianity and the fourteenth century" (*History of European Morals*, ii., 15). And Gibbon, in a famous sentence, has observed that "if a man were called upon to fix a period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and most prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus" (A.D. 96-180).

Instead of finding a society destitute of good teaching and good institutions, he would have found both in an abundance ample to meet the needs of the time. In all its charitable work Christianity was only carrying on the work that had been carried on for long by Pagans. It was Trajan, a Pagan emperor, who first opened orphan asylums in Rome, and Antoninus Pius added to their number in honor of his wife. The temples of Æsculapius, Serapis, and Hygea served as medical colleges, temples, and hospitals. The distribution of charity was both frequent and widespread—too much so for the welfare of the nation. What, then, were the institutions that sprang up under Christianity that had "never been thought of or heard of in heathenism before"? Perhaps the institutions that were lacking were, as one writer remarks, those of "illustrious families becoming extinct in the cloister; wives leaving their husbands, and husbands their wives; family estates sold for the purpose of founding establishments in which idleness and cowardice too often found a shelter; the country infested with hordes of so-called monks, pillaging the poor."* Perhaps the institutions lacking were those of the *auto da fé*, the torturing in gloomy dungeons of men and women whose only offence had been honesty of thought and speech, or the witch-burnings of the Middle Ages. These were certainly lacking in Pagan society; but they were deficiencies that Christianity soon supplied.

In matters of morals, too, the Pagans had nothing to learn of Christians. The boot was on the other foot. It almost passes comprehension how, in these days of cheap publications and public libraries, men can still go on repeating the old stories concerning the new moral ideal set up by Christianity, and its introduction of the principle of the brotherhood of man. For a shilling or two one can now get the writings of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, to name no others, on the subject of morals; and it is simply impossible for anyone to read only these three of the Roman writers and not see how utterly false are the ordinary Christian claims. There is no more oft-repeated doctrine among the Stoics than that of the brotherhood of man. The whole of the meditations of Marcus Aurelius are permeated with it. It was Socrates who, when he was asked to what country he belonged, replied: "To the world." It was the Roman emperor whose official duties caused him to offer up prayers for the whole human race. It was Seneca who wrote: "Nature made us all brethren when she begat us from the same materials." It was Epictetus who said: "Never,' in answer to the question to what country you belong, say you are an Athenian or a Corinthian, but that you are a Cosmopolitan." It would take too long to multiply these illustrations further. The matter may be summed up in the words of Mr. Lecky:—

> "We find a system of ethics of which, when we consider the range and beauty of its precepts, the sublimity of the motives to which it appealed, and its perfect freedom from superstitious elements, it is not too much to say that, though it may have been equalled, it has never been surpassed.....Stoicism placed beyond cavil the great distinctions between right and wrong. It inculcated the doctrine of universal brotherhood, it created a noble legislation, and it associated its moral system with the patriotic spirit which was then the animating spirit of Roman life. The early Platonists of the Empire.....gave free scope to the amiable qualities, and supplied a theory of right and wrong suited, not merely for heroic characters and extreme emergencies, but also for the characters and circumstances of common life. The Pythagorean and Neo-platonic schools revived the feeling of religious reverence; inculcated humility, prayerfulness, and purity of thought; and accustomed men to associate their moral ideals with the Deity rather than with themselves."*

And this in a society that was "in a state of utter decrepitude," that was "flooded" with immorality, and "without any principle of regeneration."

C. COHEN.

* W. D. Babington, *Fallacies of Race Theories*, p. 56.

* *History of European Morals*, i., pp. 291, 355.

A Laugh in Church.

SHE sat on the sliding cushion,
The dear, wee woman of four;
Her feet, in their tiny slippers,
Hung dangling over the floor;
She meant to be good; she had promised,
And so, with her big, brown eyes,
She stared at the meeting-house windows
And counted the crawling flies.

She looked far up at the preacher,
But she thought of the honey bees
Droning away at the blossoms
That whitened the cherry-trees;
She thought of a broken basket
Where, curled in a dusty heap,
Three sleek, round puppies with fringy ears
Lay snuggled and fast asleep.

Such soft, warm bodies to cuddle,
Such queer little hearts to beat,
Such swift, round tongues to kiss,
Such sprawling, cushiony feet;
She could feel in her clasping fingers
The touch of the satiny skin,
And a cold, wet nose exploring
The dimples under her chin.

Then a sudden ripple of laughter
Ran over the parted lips,
So quick that she could not catch it
With her rosy finger tips.
The people whispered, "Bless the child!"
As each one waked from a nap;
But the dear, wee woman hid her face
For shame in her mother's lap.

—*Pittsburg Times.*

Would have to Borrow One.

Some time ago a well-known barrister had under cross-examination a youth from the country who rejoiced in the name of Samson,—whose replies were the cause of much laughter in the court.

"And so," questioned the barrister, "you wish the court to believe that you are a peacefully disposed and inoffensive kind of person?"

"Yes."

"And that you have no desire to follow the steps of your namesake, and smite the Philistines?"

"No, I've not," answered the youth, "and if I had the desire I ain't got the strength at present."

"Then you think you would be unable to cope successfully with a thousand enemies and utterly rout them with the jawbone of an ass?"

"Well," answered the ruffled Samson, "I might have a try when you have done with the weapon."—*Spare Moments.*

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Acid Drops.

LORD ROSEBERY'S recent Rectorial Address to the students of Glasgow University is now published in pamphlet form by A. L. Humphreys, Piccadilly, under the title of *Questions of Empire*. The price of this publication is one shilling, which is a good deal for thirty-seven pages of large-sized type. But when peers condescend to become authors we can hardly expect their productions at common market prices.

It is beyond our special scope in the *Freethinker* to criticise Lord Rosebery's political and social views. There are certain passages, however, with which we may fairly deal. He refers incidentally to the Churches in relation to the "self-examination" which he declares to be necessary to a people who have to bear imperial responsibilities. "The Churches, it is true," he says, "are always demanding it—all the more honor to them. But the adverb 'always' contains the secret of their want of success, or of their only partial success. They are always, necessarily, doing it, so they necessarily deaden their effect; it is their business to do it, and so men pass on." Could there, we ask, be a stronger condemnation of professional exhorters? Lord Rosebery simply corroborates what we have said a hundred times, that sermonising people in the name of morality, or righteousness, or whatever you like to call it, is a sheer waste of time and energy. The ethical appeals of the regular pulpit, week after week, and year after year, make as much impression on the character of the auditors as water makes upon the back of a duck. And the people in the pews know it, only they don't *like* to say so; and the preachers know it, only they can't *afford* to say so.

"The missions of the Churches," Lord Rosebery says later on, "and the Churches themselves, apart from their sacred functions and home labors, which directly serve the State so far as they raise their flocks, have incalculably aided in the expansion, consolidation, and civilisation of the Empire." We agree with his lordship. Christian missions *have* "incalculably" aided—in the sense of "infinitesimally." The amount is too small to be calculated. But there is a certain sense in which missions have contributed handsomely. They have sometimes broken ground for the trader, the adventurer, and the political agent. Did not a Maori chief, out in New Zealand, say that the missionary came along and taught the natives to "look up," and that when they looked down again all their land was gone?

Lord Rosebery is understood not to be a frequent churchgoer; he has even been reported to be something of a sceptic. In his Glasgow address, however, he indulges in several pious expressions. He talks of our "responsibility to God and man," thus mixing the language of a parson with that of a statesman. He says that on a certain virtue "under Providence" depends the future of our race. This is a sort of utterance in which Lord Rosebery will never be able to rival President Kruger. In the Englishman—or should we say Scotsman?—it sounds rather strained; whereas, in the old Dutchman, it is so entirely natural. President Kruger returns thanks to God and the captain of the ship for his safe voyage to Europe. His logic is infantine, but it just matches his piety. No doubt he feels, in a muddled sort of way, that while God did the whole job the captain did a little bit. Anyhow, he was on board, and that counts. Still, if the captain had died, fallen ill, or been otherwise disabled, his place would have been filled by another officer. Not even President Kruger would have liked to know that Providence alone was navigating the ship.

When he comes to his peroration, Lord Rosebery gives a free rein to his new-found piety. "Please God"—"the finger of the Divine"—"the supreme direction of the Almighty"—are phrases that occur in a single paragraph. Can it be that his lordship has taken a lesson from the late Mr. Gladstone's book? That distinguished leader of the Liberal party used to take the Almighty round at political meetings as an organ-grinder carries about a less venerable object. Whether he was still of the same opinion, or had radically changed his mind, God was always with him. He had always one faithful supporter in the Deity he worshipped on Sundays and exploited every other day in the week. And the trick succeeded splendidly. When the Liberal audiences—largely Nonconformists—saw the peroration was coming, and heard the "ineffable name" booming round the place, they half-shut their eyes, bowed their heads, and felt that the Grand Old Man was another Moses. Lord Rosebery must have noticed this in former years, and it looks as though he were beginning to think that it is, after all, the ace of trumps in the game of "Liberal leader."

We find it difficult, for our part, to believe that Lord Rosebery is quite sincere in declaring that the British Empire is a thing "human, yet not wholly human, for the most heedless and the most cynical must see the finger of the Divine." The expression itself is not a very happy one. Bible readers will recollect that the magicians of Egypt recognised "the finger of God" when they saw their unfortunate country swarming with lice. But let that pass, and let us take his lordship at a somewhat happier moment. "Do we not hail in this," he asks, "less the energy and fortune of a race than the supreme direction of the Almighty?" Now what is this but the old chosen-people impudence again? Surely the brilliant and accomplished Lord Rosebery was playing to the gallery. He must really know better in his own mind. The power of Great Britain, and the greatness of the British Empire, are as natural as the rising and setting of the sun. The position of this island, its wonderful resources, its independence of the continent of Europe, its immunity from attack, the necessary hardiness of its population, its vast seaboard with every facility for breeding fishermen and navigators; all these things, and many more, contributed to its success by giving it the first great start in the world-race under the conditions of modern science. The problem is as open as a hat, as clear as daylight. There is no room for metaphysical mystery or theological hocus-pocus. We repeat, therefore, that in our opinion Lord Rosebery is simply "trying it on" with the dull, pious, ignorant, and credulous mob of his countrymen. It is possible, of course, and perhaps probable, that such tactics may forward his political progress, but he might as well remember that they will certainly lower him in the estimation of the judicious.

The Rev. Father Brown, of Bristol, is a funny man—though perhaps unintentionally. Speaking at the recent Colston Anniversary, he said that "the grandest and noblest work of man was to co-operate with the great Savior of men for the salvation of the souls of men." Co-operating with Omnipotence is a distinctly good idea. How we go round, said the fly on the wheel. The little fellow thought he was co-operating. No doubt the horse and driver were much obliged to him. And no doubt God Almighty is much obliged to Father Brown.

Old Dowie is having the same experience wherever he goes. At Manchester, Leeds, and elsewhere, the medical students create disorder at his meetings. It is very ill-mannered on their part. It is also very silly, for they are open to the retort that their quarrel with him is a professional one. Surely they are not afraid that science will suffer if it does not suppress opposition.

Balaam was brought up to curse the people of Israel, and he was constrained to bless them. Something of the same sort happened to the Rev. H. Moore at a recent missionary gathering in Huddersfield. He was obliged to say that the heathen Japs were ahead of us in many ways. They were industrious, thrifty, and temperate. A drunken man was rarely seen in Japan. And young Japs made great sacrifices in order to obtain a good education. Still, their besetting sin was pride, of which we suppose Christianity is to cure them, though it has had the opposite effect on the nations it has already converted.

The vicar of Aldershot has discovered a new reason why no elector should vote for "any Jew, Atheist, anti-Churchman, or heretic." The elector has to make "the sign of Christ's holy cross" on the ballot paper, and a mark like that should only go against proper names. Our esteemed contributor, Mr. G. L. Mackenzie, points out, however, in the *Sun* that the elector makes the mark of the Greek cross on the ballot paper, not of Christ's cross. And thus ends the reverend gentleman's brilliant little discovery.

There seems to be no end to the number of curious and remarkable new sects which are continually making their appearance amongst the ignorant and superstitious Russian peasantry. The latest novelty in this way is a new sect in Lithuania, which does not acknowledge the pastors, churches, marriage, baptism, nor any of the sacraments, all of which it considers superfluous. The followers of the new religion will not build any more new houses, as they believe the Day of Judgment is soon approaching.

Another sect that has also appeared—the "Benefactors"—also prophesies the end of the world. As there is little time left to live, the preachers advise their congregations to enjoy themselves while they may. At one of the last meetings held by the "Benefactors" the congregation drank up six and a-half barrels of beer.

The resident in Cossack, West Australia, who writes in the following terms to the *Sydney Bulletin*, must intend to be sarcastic: "In the interests of those who keep fighting-dogs, I would suggest that we always have evening service at Cossack. At present the Sunday morning service and the Sunday morning dog-fight clash, and it is very disappointing to a man if he takes his dog on to the wharf to fight and part of the audience leaves for church."

Quite a novel, not to say ghastly, question engaged the

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attention of the Cardiff Guardians the other day. A Protestant man complained bitterly on discovering that his amputated arm had been buried with the remains of a young Roman Catholic woman. Could sectarian bitterness go farther? If this Protestant person had been asked to embrace the young woman when she was alive with that arm of his when it was animate, one might have understood his objection—if she were not particularly good-looking. As a sound Protestant believer, he is, of course, going to heaven. Is he afraid that the young Romanist woman will take his arm with her to the other place, and leave him that limb short when the Resurrection takes place?

The 123 Nonconformist parishioners who have been summoned for refusing to pay tithes to the vicar of Bispham are determined to resist to the uttermost. 'Tis a pretty squabble. If the Church gets her own in the way of tithe, she is not likely to add to her numbers from the ranks of the Bispham Dissenters.

Canon Atkinson, vicar of St. Michael's, Coventry, says that going into a church merely to listen to an anthem is not a religious act. Of course not; one must go to listen, most of all, to the sermon. That obligation may keep people away altogether, but it is, all the same, almost wicked to go into church simply to listen to some music, and then sneak out before the parson has had a chance to preach. The offended Canon says that people "relieve their perambulations of the streets by just looking in for a quarter of an hour to ravish their senses with sweet sounds. Such action casts a slur upon the worship of God." And is slighting to the parson—which is probably what the Canon really means.

The Evangelical *News* is concerned at the utter disregard manifested in these modern times for the holiness of religion. It specially refers to the preliminary announcement of an "attraction" to be added shortly to the "turns" at a pier entertainment. On the stage of this pavilion of amusement is to be enacted the Passion Play of Ober-Ammergau, faithfully represented by the biograph. Then the *News* says: "Will it be believed that this awful parody of all we hold most sacred has already been performed on the pier of a sea-coast town a week or two ago? Even the secular journals find room for a protest against such sacrilege. One correspondent writes: 'Here, in the centre of Christendom, in the diocese of Canterbury, the crowd is mildly amused by the dying agony of a stage Christ on the cross, and rushes off the pier for the "last drink" after gaping admiration at the naturalness of the Last Supper.'"

Continental pietists have been much scandalised by the reports of a scene which took place during "high mass" at the Church of Saint Irene, one of the largest and most frequented places of worship in Athens. The chanting of one of the assistant priests did not please the officiating priest, who, abruptly interrupting the service, called on him in a brusque, insulting tone to "stop that miserable chanting," and ordered him peremptorily to leave the church. The chanter, not brooking this insult, retorted in a similar strain, with the result that the two priests flew at one another and came to blows. They were, with great difficulty, separated—not unscathed—by the worshippers, and another priest was sent for to continue the service.

Many people who have been brought up "religiously" will have dismal recollections of their sufferings on the Lord's Day in early years. Someone writes for the *Church Gazette* an account of his own experience. He says: "Knowing what was coming, our spirits began to fall on Friday or so; on Saturday they sank very low, and on waking up on Sunday they were at zero, or as far below it as they could go. Getting downstairs, we had to sing a hymn to welcome the joyful day: what bitter satire it seemed to us! Then prayers, and breakfast followed, all secular subjects being strictly tabooed. As we were not youthful prodigies in theology, this meant that all meals had to be taken in silence."

Then he describes the round of church attendance, and the infliction of having to listen to a sermon of Archbishop Leighton or Isaac Barrow read by his father from a ponderous tome. "We had to sit up straight and listen to a screed of at least an hour. If anyone so much as closed an eye—though mine often waxed very heavy—it did not escape severe censure. I now understand the real nature of the Eutychian heresy. A final hymn followed, and then, 'all rapture through and through,' we were packed off to bed. On Monday morning we were as merry as grigs. This was the old way of trying to bring up children in the way they should go."

Dr. Talmage persists in his suggestions that Freethinkers wish to burn the Bible. Time after time, in his discourses, he reverts to that absurd idea. "Oh, how many assaults," he exclaims, "upon that Word! All the hostilities that have ever been created on earth are not to be compared with the hostilities against that one Book." Well, it is supposed to be a Divine revelation, and Dr. Talmage, with the assistance of the Almighty, ought to be equal to its protection.

He tells a story, in one of his latest sermons, of a man who said, in his "infidel desperation," to his wife: "You must not be reading that Bible." Then he alleges that this "infidel" snatched it away from her. "And though in that Bible was a lock of hair of their dead child, he pitched the Book with its contents into the fire, and stirred it with the tongues, and spat on it, and cursed it, and said: 'Susan, never have any more of that damnable stuff here.' How many individual and organised attempts have been made to exterminate that Bible?"

Talmage is not so dense as really to believe that Freethinkers have the slightest desire to make Bible-bonfires, or that they would put any such veto on their wives as he suggests by this little piece of fiction. Freethinkers do not wish to "exterminate" the Bible. What they do endeavor to do is to "exterminate" the false views which prevail in regard to it. Even with advanced Christians it is still regarded as in some sense the Word of God. And who shall count the myriads who still believe, "because they so were bred," that it is infallible and free from error? These are the notions Freethinkers hope to "exterminate," and not the book itself, which, as far as they are concerned, may remain as a collection of writings, illustrating various phases of superstition.

"Infidelity," says the great Talmage, "declares 'I will exterminate the Bible.'" Of course, as we have explained, it declares nothing of the kind; and, by the way, we object to the term "infidelity" as applied to a form of thought the chief feature of which is the inculcation of fidelity—fidelity to the truth. Then Dr. Talmage inquires whether the "many individual and organised attempts to exterminate the Bible have been successful"? Well, we can tell him that since the publication of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, to which he alludes, up to the present time, there has been tremendous havoc played with the old notions amongst cultured people as to the trustworthiness of the book in nearly all its main features. And this process of enlightenment is going on rapidly among the multitude.

Before the fourteen-year-old son of a respectable Jew, in Warsaw, hanged himself the other day, he wrote: "I have hanged myself out of mere curiosity. I had to find out what they were doing in the other world."

At the Old Bailey, this week, Richard Percival Durnford, fifty, pleaded guilty to forging a cheque for £5. Mr. Warburton, for the prosecution, said prisoner was originally an ordained clergyman, and had been curate at Garston, near Liverpool; at Ware, in Dorsetshire; and he was for some time in Argyllshire, where he had some unpleasantness. He returned to England, and joined the Roman Catholic Church; but he was convicted of an impudent swindle, and was sentenced to nine months' hard labor. On his release he was arrested for a fraud in Argyllshire, and was again sentenced. In May, 1898, he entered the employ of the Church of England Temperance Society, where he remained until May last, when he became secretary of another society, which favored the closing of public-houses on Sunday. He went to Barnet, where he seemed to have organised a very successful meeting, and the following morning he opened an account with the local bank with the proceeds of the meeting—£6 odd. This money he at once drew out in small sums, and his teetotal friends would be surprised to hear that this temperance advocate was in the habit of spending his evenings in a public-house and at billiards. Altogether prisoner had drawn bogus cheques on the account to the amount of £200. Prisoner was sentenced to nine months' hard labor.—*Western Independent.*

A Church Missionary Society clergyman, who was until recently laboring at Scanterbury, Rupert's Land, was, it is said, called "the little minister" by the Indians. The actual word used by them was *makuhdawekoonuhyanessmenaun!*

The "up-to-datedness," in Biblical matters, of the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* is still engaging attention in the religious journals. The Rev. E. Mansel-Townshend, Llanvapley Rectory, Abergavenny, has written another protest—this time to the *Rock*. He finds fault with the writer of the "Literary Letter" in that journal in regard to his lame apology for recommending the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He thinks the reviewer should have warned those who have a "love and reverence for the Word of God" against the tendency of these works, which "show irreverence for, or unbelief in, the Bible as God's Word."

He concludes his little tirade as follows: "I feel it very

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deeply, as a national disgrace and discredit to a Christian country, that a work like the *Encyclopædia Britannica* should attempt to perpetuate what is a grave libel upon our race—namely, that we are a nation of unbelievers, whom nothing short of the scientific scepticism which it embodies and adopts will satisfy."

Cardinal Vaughan explains that the third pilgrimage to Rome from England, which leaves on December 27, will "concentrate its whole attention on the Act of Solemn Homage." This means that "the English pilgrims will join 'with the Fisherman of the Universe, with the Vicar of Christ,' in the most solemn and splendid act of world-wide religion that can be performed over the tomb of the apostles, when the Pope, on the last night of the year, will 'unite two centuries in a solemn consecration of homage to Jesus Christ.'" The Cardinal thinks that there is need for such an act, in view of the sad spectacle offered by the populations of Christendom. On the other hand, rational people are likely to conclude that the really "sad spectacle" will be the "act of homage."

The Society known as Œuvre des Brêtres Convertis seems to have assisted 101 French priests to obtain useful secular employment. Most of them are now teachers and parish schoolmasters; two are police officers, two journalists, one directs a mission for the deaf and dumb, one directs an orphanage, one is a stationer, one is a colonist, one is a superintendent in a hospital, one is a servant in a rich family, etc. Is there any hope of persuading English clerics to forsake their "livings" for some useful secular employment?

Quite a series of criminal charges have been made of late against clergymen and ex-clergymen. At the Winchester Assizes, James Henry Thompson, 48, a clergyman, was sentenced to twelve months' hard labor for assaulting a girl who was under fifteen years of age. It was stated that the prisoner, when curate at Beaulieu, Hampshire, had the girl in his Sunday-school and prepared her for confirmation, so that he must have known her age by the school register. She also entered his service, and it was alleged that, in consequence of the familiarity between them, the prisoner's wife left him.

The Rev. Frederick Carlisle, clerk in holy orders, pleaded guilty to conspiring to defraud in connection with a scheme for starting a magazine to assist hospitals. He was sentenced at the Central Criminal Court to six months' imprisonment.

An old scoundrel named Beresford Hope, formerly a clergyman, has received a sentence of eighteen months' imprisonment for acts of impropriety with a youth.

An Australian parson, who lately condemned dancing as an ungodly exercise, has just started social meetings, at which kiss-in-the-ring and hunt-the-slipper are the favorite pastimes. This gentleman seems to draw very pretty distinctions.—*Topical Times.*

Doesn't Sir Henry Irving pay too much heed to the absurd allegations by antediluvian clerics against the stage of to-day? asks the *Topical Times.* He has been hammering away at them again in Glasgow. It reminds us a little of the Nasmyth hammer and the insect. Isn't it a trifle beneath the dignity of our greatest actor to discuss seriously a statement that "the actor's vocation is not according to the mind of God"? Of course, this is the assertion of a professional pulpiteer.

A nice point for the consideration of Christian people is raised in the *Record.* A lady correspondent writes to invite the opinion of readers in regard to doing needlework strictly for a charity on a Sunday. "Say I am kept indoors all day on Sunday through indisposition, would they think it right for me to work for the poor, or is it best for me to read and trifle away the day doing almost nothing? Would needlework on a Sunday have a bad effect on the minds of my children and servants?"

Obviously the answer is, that she should "read and trifle away the day doing almost nothing." We cannot have the blessed Sabbath desecrated by needlework, even though it be for the poor. Our Lord said: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." The spirit of that utterance would, of course, exclude any such work of utility as the lady refers to. It is now generally understood that what our Savior meant was that the Sabbath was made for parsons. It is quite certain that *they* would never sanction needlework on a Sunday even for a Dorcas Society.

"Poor Uncle Horace," said Isobel (aged seven), after a visit to an English rectory; "he gets so sad; he wants all the people in the parish to go to heaven, and they won't go."

The paths of the religious and moral censor are not always those of peace, as an incident occurring at Yorkville, near Columbia, S.C., last week goes to illustrate. The Rev. A. J. Hensley, Baptist, made public charges of immorality against several business men in town. Indicating a certain block of buildings, he declared that it was disreputable and no fit place for decent people to visit. Dr. A. F. Scoggins, a druggist, and the only unmarried man implicated, met the Rev. Mr. Hensley on the street the next evening, and asked if he was included. The preacher said he was, and refused to retract anything. Scoggins suggested that, as they were of a size, they fight it out. The preacher agreed, and they fell to. The preacher's wind soon failed, and he was knocked down. Scoggins pounded him on the ground till the Rev. Mr. Hensley cried: "O Lord, take him off; don't let him kill me." The Lord did not come to the reverend gentleman's rescue, but the bystanders interfered and induced Scoggins to get up. Such is the clerical life in the vicinity where the above occurred.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The anti-Semitic feeling in France seems unfortunately to be rather on the increase than the decline that many had hoped for. At Fontainebleau something like a state of anarchy has prevailed. The efforts of General André, the war minister, to stamp out Anti-Semitism at the college have, we regret to learn, been productive merely of a spirit of defiance and strife. The other week several duels took place in the college, one of them being between a Jew and a Roman Catholic, and arising out of these hateful racial and religious prejudices.

Professor Adeney is contributing a series of articles to the *Christian World* on "A Century's Progress in Religious Life and Thought." He says: "Religion has been profoundly affected by science, but as yet science has not shown much readiness to concede the claims of religion." That is perfectly true as regards the attitude of science. What is the attitude of religion? Let Professor Adeney answer: "From ignoring science, or fearing it, or viewing it with suspicion and jealousy, devout, intelligent Christian people have come to welcome it open-armed, admitting their duty to yield to the imperial rights of truth, even though these may run counter to long-cherished tenets."

That has always been the way with religionists. When they have found the truth which they have denounced as heresy too strong, they make a virtue of necessity, and "welcome it open-armed."

William Thorne, of Broughton Astley, Leicestershire, cut his throat, and then took to writing his reflections as his life ebbed away. There was a good deal of "God" in them, so that the poor fellow can hardly be claimed as an "infidel."

The newspapers report an "amazing" game of poker, which was played at Stirling, Illinois, to decide whether the pastor of a church should remain or go. But what is there "amazing" in this to a reader of the Bible? Casting lots is common enough in both Testaments. Even after the ascension of Jesus, when the vacancy caused by the suicide of Judas had to be filled, the Apostles cast lots which of two candidates should be selected, and they regarded that throw of the dice—or whatever it was—as the decision of the Holy Ghost.

General Gordon was a great Bible reader, and when he was in doubt about what he should do he used to toss a coin, and let Providence decide it "head or tail."

The *Lyttleton Times* reports the case of a girl who applied to the Magistrate's Court for a maintenance order against the father of her illegitimate child. She stated that her parents had turned her out of her house; and, on being asked whether they went to church, she replied that they were constant attendants. Whereupon the bench remarked that it was wonderful how often the people who made the loudest professions of religion were the very last to lend a helping hand to those in trouble.

We have seen some strange announcements on church notice-boards, but this one, outside a North London Congregational place of worship, takes the cake. The subject for Sunday evening was "The B. O. H. and the O. D. V." What the Devil did it mean? O. D. V. is phonetic for the French name for brandy. Was the man of God going to discourse on that—with samples?

Obituary.

I REGRET to have to record that the energetic Secretary of the Camberwell Branch of the N. S. S., Mr. T. Wilmot, has just lost through death his young, bright, and promising daughter. The loss was the more painful as it was comparatively sudden. The funeral took place on Wednesday, November 21, at Nunhead Cemetery, without, of course, any religious ceremony. At the request of Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot, Mr. Charles Watts delivered an appropriate address at the graveside.—C. W.

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 2, Aldgate Public Baths, Goulston-street; at 7.30, "The Use and Abuse of the Bible." Admission free.

Monday, December 3, Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street, Islington; at 8, "Life, Death, and After." Admission free.

Tuesday, December 4, Paddington Baths, Queen's-road, Bayswater, W.; at 8, "Secularism and the Bible." Admission free.

December 9, 16, 23, 30, Athenæum Hall.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. H. NASH.—We quite understand your loss of temper. It is so characteristic of your species. We never asked you to discuss the general Tacitus question with us. You charged us with falsifications, etc., and we asked you to point them out. You attempted to do so and failed, yet you had not the grace to express a word of regret. Indeed, you almost appeared to think you had honored us by your infamous accusation. Go your own way—like a good Christian. We have no time to waste upon you.

W. PUGH.—Thanks for the notes of Mr. Treharne-Jones's lecture, which we hope to make use of next week. We are overfull of copy at present.

T. EVANS.—Huxley's *Physiology* would probably suit you. We believe the price is 4s. 6d., less the usual discount.

H. PERCY WARD.—You have fought gallantly, you have won what was possible, and we congratulate you in the name of the Freethought party—for which we have, in such a case, a right to speak.

T. OLLERENSHAW.—Thanks. Mr. Foote is very well.

W. E. DOWDING.—Should be pleased to oblige, but it is really an advertisement; and if we inserted such things gratuitously we should soon be flooded with them. Remember the thin edge of the wedge.

OWING to pressure upon our space of other matter, Mr. Foote's rather long statement and observations on the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund have to stand over till next week.

F. E. WILLIS.—'Tis better to have fought and lost than never to have fought at all.

W. J. GILBERT.—Next week.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Received: James Neate, £1; Mrs. Neate, £1; Albert Simson, £1; A. C. Brown, 5s.; Per W. Lamb, 10s.; W. H. Deakin, £2.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges: Mrs. B. E. Marks, 15s.

N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges: Gateshead Friend, 5s.

A. J. H.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

J. S. DUNKERLY.—Almanack has been sent you. Thanks for your trouble in the matter of the hall, which you will see has been engaged. With regard to Jonah, see Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*. There is a lot of valuable information in that iconoclastic little work.

SHILLING WEEK.—W. J. Gilbert, 1s.; J. D. (per J. Neate), 1s.

A. B. MOSS.—We regret to hear that you have been laid up, and hope you are now restored to health.

W. H. MOORE.—Obliged. See paragraph.

D. FRANKEL.—Compelled to hold your letter over till next week.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

J. WALKER.—Thanks for your encouraging letter. Mr. Foote is preparing a volume of his literary and semi-literary essays for the press. It will include the criticisms of Marie Corelli, which you wish to see in a permanent form. It is pleasant to hear that so many of your friends have enjoyed reading his *Sign of the Cross*, and that it has broken down their prejudice against him as a "vulgar infidel."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Gray's Gazette—People's Newspaper—Two Worlds—Birmingham Weekly Mercury—Westminster Gazette—Portsmouth Evening News—Western Independent—Ethical World—Freethought—Freidenker—Truthseeker (New York)—Boston Investigator—Free Society—Morning Leader—New Zealand Colonist—Liberator—Huddersfield Examiner—Blue Grass Blade—Crescent—Rhondda Leader—Leeds Daily News—Lyttleton Times—Bristol Mercury.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE had a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, though some of his friends had gone off to the Aldgate Baths in response to his appeal, with a view to "assisting"—at least in the French sense of the expression. This evening (Dec. 2) Mr. Foote will go eastward and deliver the third of the Aldgate Baths course of lectures. East London Freethinkers should try to get the hall filled on this occasion.

On Monday evening (Dec. 3) Mr. Foote lectures at the Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street, Islington; and on Tuesday evening (Dec. 4) at the Paddington Public Baths, Queen's-road, Bayswater—close to Whiteley's. The admission in both cases is free, and ample opportunity will be afforded for questions and discussions. Freethinkers in these localities should make a special effort to get their Christian friends to attend the meetings, which are really designed for the "unconverted."

There was relative peace at the Aldgate Public Baths on Sunday evening. This was secured by the presence of the police, who will continue on duty there till the end of this course of lectures. Mr. Charles Watts occupied the platform, with Mr. Victor Roger as chairman, and there was a good, orderly, and attentive audience. The lecturer was in his best form, and some useful discussion was elicited. One opponent was the Rev. Mr. Alcock, a West London clergyman, who has agreed (we understand) to hold a public debate with Mr. Watts.

Mr. Watts will lecture at the Athenæum Hall this evening (Dec. 2). His subject will be "Will Christianity Survive the Twentieth Century?"

The hall of the Battersea Public Baths has been engaged for three Sunday evenings—December 2, 9, and 16. Mr. Cohen will lead off this evening (Dec. 2), and will be followed by Mr. Watts. Bills advertising this course of lectures can be obtained for distribution from Miss Vance, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court. It is a long time since any Freethought lectures were delivered at Battersea, and the local "saints" should all do their level best to render these meetings successful.

Mr. Percy Ward did not win a seat on the Birmingham School Board. Still, he polled the respectable number of 8,869 votes. This was considerably in excess of the poll of Mr. Griffin, the Social Democratic candidate, who was thus proved to be the weaker of the two. Perhaps at the next election the purely Secular candidate will be allowed to fight on that ticket for all it is worth, without having votes diverted into losing channels. Mr. Millington, the candidate of the Labor party, has also been defeated. His party invited the help of the Secularists at the outset, but refused to accept "Secular Education," whereupon he was left to fight his own battle. Another defeated candidate is the Bishop of Coventry—the blackguard bishop, who libelled the Birmingham Secularists in the most outrageous manner.

Mr. Ward's votes would have prevented the defeat of the Chapel party if it had secured them. About 1,500 householders voted for him, and 300 of these were plumpers. The number is not enough to cause a revolution, but it is enough to show that the friends of Secular Education in Birmingham have to be reckoned with. Mr. Ward's brave fight this time has been in every way beneficial. He will probably cut a very much better figure in the next elections.

The Church party, in spite of the defeat of the blackguard bishop, seems to have a majority of one on the Birmingham School Board. This is hardly a matter which the Secularists can regret, for it appears that the only way to teach the so-called Liberals a lesson in their own professed principles is to let them have a taste of oppression themselves.

The *Rhondda Leader* is still full of the case of Mr. Treharne-Jones, who has seceded from a curacy in the Established Church and publicly proclaimed himself a Secularist. It reports the ex-reverend gentleman's second lecture, and prints several letters on the subject of his secession. We observe that Mr. Treharne-Jones is announced as intending

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to deliver Secular lectures whenever he can get a hall. The local Secularists should advise him to communicate with us.

The *Liberator* (Melbourne) reproduces Mr. Cohen's article on "The Decline of Religion" from the *Freethinker*. We regret to see that Mr. Symes is still pursued by cowardly Christian bigots. Having half-killed him, they now smash his windows, and the police take no notice. For five years past, Mr. Symes says, he has been unable to earn a bare living. He has had no proper home, and next to no furniture. Still, he has never deserted the Freethought flag for a minute. But now he has to tell all whom it concerns that "either the *Liberator* must be better supported, or it must go down."

This number of the *Freethinker* will be in the hands of many of its London readers before they go to the polling station to vote for School Board candidates. Once more we beg Secularists to disregard other points and give their undivided support to candidates who are sound on "Secular Education." To plump for such candidates seems to be the plain duty of all who believe that the great educational problem of the future is how to rescue children from the hands of priests and the slavery of superstition. The editor of the *Freethinker* has six votes in the Finsbury division, and he means to cast them all for Mr. Barwick, who is a real and not a nominal Progressive.

We hope Mr. F. J. Gould will win a seat on the Leicester School Board. It is hardly necessary to press his claims upon the Secular party. His success would be a triumph for the only true principle of State education.

The *Secular Almanack* for 1901 is now on sale at the Freethought Publishing Company's office. This publication is issued by the National Secular Society, into whose exchequer all profit will go that may be realised. As usual the Almanack contains a valuable Calendar, and a mass of useful information concerning Freethought organisations at home and abroad. There are also some special articles by Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, Moss, and Heaford, and "Chilperic" and "Mimnermus." Secularists should keep a copy of this Almanack by them, and might even lend it with advantage to their friends.

Freethought in Germany.

THE land of Goethe and Heine, of Büchner and Haeckel, is one of the classic seats of Freethought. Germany, with its elaborate learning, has always yielded a rich harvest of heretical nourishment for the intellectual life of the nations. If only she would shake off the yoke of her crushing militarism, her sons and daughters would soon be able to adorn the crown of Teutonic learning with the bright jewel of liberty. But here, as in every other department of human activity, the Church —coward and tyrant in one—bars the way of progress with the brute weight of its authority, reinforced by the willing servitude of the victims of a senile superstition. The only hope for Germany resides in the intellectual ideals of Freethought, combined with the enlightened and anti-Chauvinistic aims of the Socialist Party there.

The stringent laws prevailing in the Empire in reference to the religious question (or, rather, to the religious *questions*, for the religions of Germany are almost as plentiful as its sausages) make the open expression of unbelief a matter of extreme difficulty and danger. The penal code of the Empire protects the multifarious creeds of the country against all attack or insult, whether expressed verbally or in writing. If you publish the opinion that Catholicism is a piece of idolatry, you are liable to go to prison for your pains. Under conditions such as these, it is really impossible in Germany to deliver a Freethought lecture, or to publish a Freethought journal, unless you are content to soar into the serene regions of pure philosophy, and are willing to refrain from citing any controversial opinion, for such opinion evidently would relate to one or other of the thirty-six Churches into which the one faith of the one, and only, Lord has split itself. Such a tyrannical state of affairs must be calculated to bring tears of godly gratitude into the eyes of our Christian Evidence brigade of bigots, and make them long for the day when the cowardly intolerance thus "made in Germany" may be imported bodily here, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Between the Freethought party and the Socialist party in Germany a natural affinity would seem to exist by reason of the fact that, after eliminating the Christian Socialists (who are notoriously bad Christians, and worse Socialists), every German Socialist is likewise a Freethinker. But, unfortunately, a large number of German Socialistic Freethinkers abstain from affiliating themselves with the National Freethought Federation on account of the exclusion from its program of all political questions. This exclusion has, however, been forced upon the Federation in order not to infringe certain monstrous laws which deprive German women of the right to take part in political lectures, or to join any political organisations. (How tyrannically German Christianity presses upon women we shall see in our next article.) On the other hand, there is a moderate section who reject all proposals to mix up Freethought with the social question, and confine themselves exclusively to the propagation of anti-Christian principles in opposition to all the varied forms into which clericalism, Catholic and Protestant, divides itself.

The German Federation of Freethinkers was founded at Frankfort-on-the-Main nearly twenty years ago, and its object is to bring together and organise the scattered forces of Freethought throughout the Empire. The principal aims and objects of this Society are so interesting, as evidencing the oneness of aim of the Freethought party throughout the world, that I make no apology for setting forth some of the more important clauses of this weighty declaration. These are as under :—

> "Our object is, as Freethinkers, to combat, in the domain of thought, all superstition and ignorance; to fling off all stupidities and shackles of whatsoever sort; to attack all religious intolerance, all prerogatives of caste, all extra-legal immunities, and all oppression of liberty of thought and conscience, without, however, plunging ourselves into the political arena, or occupying the necessarily narrow ground taken up by any of the existing parties."
>
> "We, therefore, demand that the chairs of science, and the professors who occupy the same, shall be free, and that the right to publish the results of scientific research shall be enjoyed without any interference on the part of religious dogma. We also claim that the results of science and of the ever progressive knowledge of nature should be made of direct utility to our children, in the sense that in the State popular schools nothing shall be taught which is in contradiction with the facts established by science."
>
> "We, accordingly, demand the complete separation of the School from the Church; that is to say, we insist on schools without creeds, and that these schools shall, in every respect, be properly equipped, so that the rising generation may be trained in the ways of free thought and liberty of action."
>
> "Only a people imbued with these principles can preserve its position in the struggle and competition of nations, and so meet the demands of modern times."
>
> "We do not base our morality on a dreamy future life, with fear of punishment and hope of reward superadded, but rather upon that doctrine of universal love towards one's fellows which springs from the fact that we are all children of one common mother, Nature, and that each man possesses a natural right to the happiness and joy that this world affords."
>
> "Only that morality which enjoins the doing of good from the promptings of one's own free nature can be regarded as genuinely noble."
>
> "We reject every species of religious oppression or constraint, whether exercised against individuals or corporations; we also condemn every kind of limitation imposed upon the full right of parents to the control of the education of their children, or upon the right (as recognised by the laws of the Empire) to renounce one's allegiance to the Church."

The Manifesto, at this point, winds up by a statement which, while it reveals the wide permeating spread of Freethought views in Germany, laments the lack of organisation owing to want of cohesion among the numerous scattered groups and individuals embracing the principles of unbelief. The statement is as under :—

> "The upholders of the foregoing principles are counted by the hundreds of thousand—nay, by millions; but, unhappily, the number of groups of individuals who seek to defend and maintain them is comparatively still slight. Political and clerical reaction seeks out every means to combat the results of scientific discovery and the final consequences which logically flow therefrom. Such being the case, the time has now come to raise the flag of

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freedom high, and to keep the path clear for the triumph of Freethought and the right of untrammelled research."

In order to defeat the iniquitous laws to which reference has above been made, a large number of Freethinkers are incorporated together under the title of "Freireligiose" ("The Congregation of Free Religion"). This body was most ably represented at the Paris Congress by Ida Altmann, of Berlin. They have quite abjured Christianity, together with all belief in God; but they practise a species of anti-dogmatic "religion of morality," and impart an anti-clerical education to their children. Many of the groups gathered under the above designation—notably the groups at Berlin and Munich—are affiliated to the German Freethought Federation. The Society at Berlin has several thousand members, and owns a private cemetery bestowed upon the members by the gift of a generous benefactor.

In my next article I shall give some additional particulars of the Freethought movement in Germany, which may, I hope, be not only of deep interest, but of great encouragement to the Freethinkers of England—of that land which, with all its advantages, will never be truly the land of the free until it begins to spend more money on scholarship than on soldiering, and tries to create citizens, and not saints.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

(To be concluded.)

Spiritual Blindness.

BEVERLEY is a sleepy little town, with a population of about 13,000. For the information of those whose geography may have grown rather rusty, it may be added that Beverley is in the East Riding of Yorkshire. It is the county town of that division of the premier English shire. Beverley is a town of some antiquity; indeed, if you spend twenty-four hours in the place, you will inevitably be informed that it carried on a flourishing trade when its now powerful rival on the banks of the Humber was yet in the land of the Great Unborn. Beverley has two glorious churches; in fact, it is questionable if any other town in England of equal size can boast two Christian temples of such magnificence. At one time Beverley was a Parliamentary borough and returned two members to our Lower Legislative Assembly. The town, however, was disfranchised for ——.

But I am forgetting myself. I did not sit down to write a history of Beverley. Besides, to refer to an unpleasant episode which is nearly forgotten by the present generation might have an unfriendly look. Hence I will return to my starting-point. I made allusion to Beverley's reputation for drowsiness. True; but things do hum a bit here sometimes as well as in other quarters. Just now the "hum" bids fair to liven into a "buzz," and this is how it came about.

A few weeks ago a certain latitudinarian Alderman of the borough read before the local Debating Society a paper on "Sunday Amusements." This Alderman is a gentleman of literary tastes, who has devoted considerable time to a study of the origin of our Sabbatarian customs, and in his paper he openly expressed approval of all kinds of recreation on the first day of the week. This ungodly laxity roused the ire of the vicar of the Minster parish, and this latter gentleman was indiscreet enough to indite a letter to the local press on the subject. And then the fun began. Both sides of the case have been championed, and the correspondence, as is invariably the case, has widened out considerably. In a recent issue the rev. gentleman, who happens also to be my spiritual pastor, and is, therefore, responsible for the welfare of my never-dying soul, roundly suggested that the writer of this present article is the unhappy victim of spiritual blindness. "Alas!" he says, "we cannot make spiritual things to be seen by the spiritually blind." Probably no Freethinker would care to quarrel with so extremely lucid and self-evident a statement, had not the clerical letter-writer also expatiated on the desirability of "exercising" the "spiritual senses." How can a man exercise a sense of which he is wholly deficient? This is unreasonable, even for a clerk in holy orders.

"We cannot make spiritual things to be seen by the spiritually blind." Certainly not. But if a man is blind, who will dare to blame him? Moreover, if he is so invincibly blind that he does not even know he is blind, upon whose shoulders shall we lay the responsibility?

After mature reflection, I have come to the conclusion that I must belong to this order of the invincibly spiritually blind, and I have drawn my opponent's especial attention to the fact that this condition is not due to any lack of church-going on my part. For at least thirty-five years of my life I joined in public devotion two, three, and even four times a week. Nor was my worship a mere formal attendance, as is the case with a considerable percentage of my vicar's congregation. The rev. gentleman says "the meeting-place of the human spirit with the Divine is a temple whose threshold the uninitiated cannot pass over." Well, I can only conscientiously answer that my search for this "threshold" was both diligent and prayerful. Why, then, should admittance to the innermost shrine have been denied to me? Why should all my patient inquiry go unrequited?

Moreover, what shall I say of my spiritual guides during all these years? Were they "blind leaders of the blind"? I roughly estimate that during my lifetime I have listened to between three and four thousand sermons, and I am not an inattentive hearer. I have asked my vicar to explain why not one of those preachers could lead me into possession of spiritual eyesight, and I look forward with considerable interest to his reply.

I am not unacquainted with the symptoms of this abnormal cerebral development denoted by the term "spiritual vision." Indeed, for many years I was firmly impressed by a conviction that I was myself a victim of the disorder. As the fact of my recovery is beyond all question, it is clear that I cannot have contracted the true type of the disease, such being well known to be a quite incurable complaint. Moreover, when a man, by his persistent haunting of infected areas for upwards of thirty years, has done his level best to acquire the malady and has met with no success, I submit he is justified in assuming that he is insusceptible to attack, and that he ought not to waste his time in further fruitless endeavors. I am therefore confirmed in my opinion that I belong to the order of the invincibly spiritually blind, or, as it would be expressed in terms of pathology, to the order of the insusceptibles. I further conclude that I was born so, that I am powerless to alter my condition, and that I am therefore in no way responsible for it.

I have thought it right to enter into this somewhat lengthy recital of my case, because it is important we should understand how elusive a faculty is this alleged spiritual vision. So subtle are the differences between the true and false types of the disorder that even the most highly qualified experts are sometimes unable to distinguish between them. In this instance not only I, but many others, labored under the erroneous impression that I saw, when all the time I saw not. In the light of such a testimony as mine, how can even the holiest man feel sure that he is in possession of true spiritual vision? After all, he may only have contracted a false, and therefore curable, type of the complaint. His case may not be so hopeless as it seems. The day may yet dawn when he, too, will awake to a sense of his complete recovery.

I will forbear to dwell upon certain qualities exhibited by persons who have acquired this disease in a malignant form. I have had too bitter an acquaintance with this variety of the human species to have any desire to widen my knowledge of its idiosyncrasies. Those who think this is a branch of study worthy of their pursuit cannot do better than frequent assiduously some church or chapel. To be fair to my opponent, who is a Canon of the Church as by law established in this realm, I would say chapel for choice. For my own part, I have come to the conclusion, founded upon a somewhat ripened experience, that nothing in this world is to be preferred above sound health, both of mind and body.

G. DAWSON BAKER.

The spiritual measure of inspiration is the depth of the thought, and never who said it.—*Emerson.*

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Tolstoi and Secular Education.

In view of the forthcoming School Board elections, it is well to bear in mind the aspect of the case for Secular Education as it affects the interests of the children. In a recent number of an American journal I find an article by Count Tolstoi on this topic, in which the great Russian writer says some weighty things that might well be brought to the attention of the people who have now, in a very small way—for the issue is not set before them in any large way—to decide whether the children are to still have theological doctrines impressed on their young minds before they can critically examine or test the truth of what they are taught. The children in this matter, as, indeed, in every matter, are helpless; there is something, indeed, tragic and grimly ironical in the fact that the "religious" beliefs, which we are told are the most tremendously important in life, of the next generation should be dependent on the "compromises" effected by rival sets of politicians, and perchance on the influence or lack of it of a few hundred publicans. To-day the children are taught a mass of doctrine which Tolstoi accurately summarises thus:—

> "We tell the child, claiming for our words the respect due to sacred truth, things which we know perfectly well that it would be absurd to believe, and which have no meaning for us. We tell this child that a mysterious and savage being, whom we call God, about six thousand years ago conceived the project of creating the world; that he, in effect, did create the world as well as man; but that, as man sinned, this God inflicted upon him and upon us the punishment for his transgressions and his faults. We add that our chief business lies in propitiating this God in order to escape the torments to which he has condemned us."

Whatever politic quibbles may be indulged in, that is the basis even of "compromise" Christianity. How many men and women in London to-day honestly believe it? Yet, owing to some curious apathy or carelessness, numbers who do not believe this superstition themselves, yet permit themselves to be hypnotised into handing their children over to be taught it; they lazily convince or half-convince themselves that the teaching of this nonsense somehow makes for morals, and they are imposed on by the terrible bogie of Secular Education, which is put before them in awful shape. In reality, of course, it is the theological parties who stand for the bogies. The child, instead of being taught naturally and kindly, and instead of its having its mind developed, is frightened by vague and mysterious dogmas, which very often, because of their vagueness and unintelligibility, frighten all the more. Tolstoi says:—

> "All children are aware that man's obligations are complex, and they possess a moral character. Yet we teach them that the greatest obligation of man consists in believing blindly in praying—that is to say, in uttering certain words at certain hours, and in swallowing some sort of a soup representing the blood and flesh of God. The governments, the ruling classes, those who possess power and influence, are indissolubly tied to them. Thus, the ruling classes are incessantly working to impress upon a child's mind the prestige of these fictions, and doubling their efforts in order that their hypnotic influence might be exerted upon the minds of the adults."

These are words whose courage is only equalled by their truth. The attempt to maintain the dogmas in the schools is not so much, on the part of the leaders, a genuine error as a gigantic hypocrisy. Three-fourths of the men who stand for the teaching of the dogmas in the schools have personally little belief in them, and the journalist who, in his columns, pretends that Secular Education is the high-road to national crime and decadence in all probability does not personally care two straws for the sanctity of the Incarnation or the Atonement. For one of the saddest convictions borne in on the observer of the passing world-drama is that half the evils or half the errors of to-day are due not so much to ignorance as to deliberate baseness and hypocrisy. Ignorance there is in plenty, in all conscience; but of knowledge stultifying itself there is a vast deal too. The hired journalist to-day will write up anything his millionaire master tells him, and the little politician, afraid to front public opinion, will echo the millionaire-kept journals.

Tolstoi, at any rate, whether one agrees with him or not, has a mind of his own, and in the article from which I have quoted he has this to say on the question of the hour:—

> "Absolute indifference regarding religious problems, the negation of all religious forms, the absence of all beliefs in positive religion, are of incomparably more value to childhood than all the teachings of the Jewish Church, no matter in what form they be presented. Knowing that Church teachings are but fiction, how could I tell a child, who questions me with simplicity and confidence about them, that they are sacred truths, while I have knowledge of their inanity?
>
> "It would be better if I could point out to him the true solutions of the questions which the Church answers with falsehoods. But, if I am incapable of doing so, I ought at least to refrain from palming off for truth what I consider a falsehood. Besides, it is not true that a man cannot find other convictions to transmit to his child but his faith in the dogma of positive religion. All sincere men know the good in their lives."

No excuse seems needed for thus lengthily quoting these weighty words, which sum up the case against teaching the orthodox dogmas in the schools, and put the case for Secular Education. Tolstoi, of course, is no Secularist, but a devout religionist. Yet he is an honest religionist, and has, indeed, achieved his fame as a teacher, primarily, by his amazing directness and honesty. And, as a result, he is, in the practical outcome of his teachings, positively nearer to the Secularist than to the orthodox dogmatist. Beyond professing to be a follower of Christ, he shares little in common with the ordinary Christian. But in the passage just quoted Tolstoi has put the main case which Secularists put with sufficient force. "All sincere men know the good in their lives." And there is quite enough work to teach children the best we *know* without teaching them speculative doctrines which at least we are aware are the subject of infinite dispute.

Frederick Ryan.

The Land of Confucius.

The Chinese empire is unique in the history of the world. It stands alone, unapproached in point of age, unexplained in its resources, unparalleled in its vitality. Prudent historians decline to fix the date of the origin of this people. In a general way they say that that great people probably originated with some nomad tribe whose history is lost in prehistoric time. All agree, however, that this is by far the oldest nation on the globe. It is the only nation now extant that was contemporaneous with the Assyrian, the Egyptian, and the ancient Jew. We speak of ancient Rome. The city of Rome was founded in the year 753, before this era; yet even then the Chinese empire was venerable. It was old when Moses inscribed the tables of stone; it was before the Pyramids of Egypt were; it had a history, with official records and annals, before the Christian era was born. In the extent of territory and population it is equalled by no State in the world. In geographical extent it is the largest, save Russia alone. It occupies a domain of more than five million square miles, with a population variously estimated at between four hundred and five hundred millions of people—that is to say, the Celestial empire comprises one-tenth of the habitable globe and one-third of the entire population of the world.

Its products range from those of the frigid to those of the tropical zone; it is intersected and diversified by mountain ranges and vast rivers, estuaries, and other natural water-ways. At one period of its history these rivers and lakes were connected by artificial canals, and the foundation of a vast system of international commerce was laid. Its mineral resources, in diversity and extent, are believed to be surpassed by those of no other part of the globe. The fertility of its soil is abundantly witnessed by the fact that it has been able to support, without the aid of foreign assistance or the interchange of commodities, countless millions of human beings from before the dawn of history. Its people are essentially an agricultural people—domestic, peace-loving, conservative, and devoted loyally to their national ideas and institutions.

The Celestial empire has always been an isolated one.

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While maintaining that seclusion, it necessarily suffered the penalty of having its early history of little interest to the rest of the world. The great world-struggle, in which mighty drama nations were the actors, did not in the slightest way affect this ancient people. The long-continued contest for supremacy between the Babylonian, the Assyrian, and the Persian did not disturb the secure and serene life of the Flowery Kingdom. The Mohammedan conquest, that swept with fire and sword from the Ganges to Central Europe, and threatened to inundate with blood the inhabited world, contained no menace to the Dragon throne. It lived on alone. Centuries came and went, and it had no intercourse with the outside world. This seclusion of the Celestial empire accounts, in part, for its vitality and its power of continuance. Throughout all of the earliest centuries its history was its own, and was not complicated with that of the rest of the world. The influences that brought it into connection with the outside world date from the thirteenth century. Up to that time China, without the aid of the rest of the world—without interchange of literature, ideas, or commerce—worked out its destiny and fulfilled its ideals. The first of these influences was the Mongol conquest in the thirteenth century. A Tartar prince from one of the northern provinces of China, developing great prowess as a warrior, inspiring his followers with the love of conquest, lust for spoil, and thirst for victory, increasing his armies by adding to them the forces from the States which he had rendered vassal to his own, succeeded in overrunning practically all of the provinces of China.

The original Middle Kingdom numbered but eighteen provinces; adding those of the outlying districts, the number finally reached to about four hundred. These provinces were governed by petty princes and pretentious governors. Rivalries, revolutions, and broils were frequent. Massacres, slaughters, and the ferocities of war make up the annals through long centuries. These internal strifes were surpassed only by the astounding power of the people to recover from their enormous devastations. As the result of the Mongol conquest by Ghengis Khan, the provinces were brought into subjection to a central authority, and the date of the empire in its modern form may be fixed at that point. This conquest by the Mongols was in many respects like the conquest of Britain by the Normans. The Mongol did not seek to overthrow the religion or abolish the institutions of the Chinese. Seeing their excellencies, and appreciating the people's affections for them, as far as possible he adopted the ideas that he found. The people of China, with immense power for absorption, assimilation, and adaptation, became part Mongolian, as the Saxons of England became part Norman.

One of the other influences tending to bring China into contact with the rest of the world was the efforts of the mediæval traveller, who, impelled by curiosity and the fabulous stories of the wondrous wealth of the people, did, with vast effort, succeed in making his way into the forbidden kingdom. Then came later the development of commerce, and still later the wars carried on for the purpose of securing a safe position in China for foreign residents. During all of this time China presented a stubborn resistance to the encroachment of the foreigner. From the earliest time that resistance showed itself. Before the Christian era one of the emperors built around the kingdom the Great Wall, which is still recognised as one of the seven wonders of the world. It was built with the sole purpose of repelling the invasion of the Tartar hordes from the north. We have still to reckon with this feeling of resistance possessed by the Chinese against contact with other people. It may be accounted for, in part, by the feeling of self-sufficiency, which is characteristic of that ancient people. They are, to a great extent, free from the ideals and ambitions that characterise the modern nations. They are not clamoring for better opportunities to sell their wares; their statesmen are not eager to acquire new markets. They are quite able to produce within their own dominions all that the people want. Their lives are simple, their wants are few, and the foreigner, in their judgment, has nothing that they cannot, happily, get along without. That feeling of self-sufficiency, of confidence in their own resources, is a part of the explanation of their reluctance to form any communication with the outside world.

Further explanation is to be found in their sense of superiority. The Chinaman looks upon the rest of the world as new-comers, as a sort of tyro, as a kind of untried adventurer. From his mountain-summit of history he contemplates this presumptuous world. He sees in it an arena of change, of succession. He sees the mournful ruins of kingdoms that once flourished, made war, and developed commerce. He sees the imposing tombs of great peoples that once helped to shape the destiny of nations, and he looks for them at present upon the field of human action in vain. They are gone, and others have taken their place. He turns to the annals of his own people, and finds that they were toiling, loving, struggling, suffering, and hoping ages before any of the modern nations were born. He thinks of the title which he lovingly gives to his emperor, the "son of heaven," and thus there has grown up through these thousands of years a feeling of superiority to the rest of mankind. It is not based so much on an intelligent comparison between himself and other people as it is fostered by the pride in his annals and in his ancient history.

Still another thing that helps to account for his resistance to foreign contact is the fact that he is naturally suspicious of all foreign people. He knows them chiefly through their attempts to invade his kingdom; he knows them through the sound of martial music and the embattled hosts. He thinks with dread and regret of the resistless impulse of these nations upon his long-cherished kingdom. It is these things which must explain, in part, that stubborn resistance which a Chinaman offers to all attempts of the foreigner to establish even fraternal relations. This was so far successful that, until within fifty years, there has been little, almost no, contact with the rest of the world.

(Dr.) J. E. Roberts.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

MORE JONAH.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—I am truly grateful for the hospitality of your columns. Permit me to say, in reply to the inquiry of your editorial note, that the firstborn of Israel were solely claimed to commemorate the death of the firstborn of Egypt (Exodus xiii. 15). The former were never sacrificed.

And now, on the principle of fair-play, will you be good enough to allow your readers a Christian version of Jonah's history, which is often implied in the *Freethinker* to be a myth? Your correspondent "R. R." professes to believe much about the fish, which many hold was not a whale, but a marine creature specially formed, a "sea-monster" (Matthew xii. 40, margin; Revised Version). The question is immaterial, and I leave it.

The difficulty of "R. R." appears from this quotation: "How is he (the fish) to spew up Jonah at Nineveh?" Now Scripture states nothing of this sort. Its brief annals imply that Jonah, being vomited on land, went straight home, and then the Word of the Lord came to him a second time (chapter iii. 1). Meanwhile, we may suppose the seamen returned, telling their wondrous story, and that this, combined with Jonah's reluctance to deliver his awful message (thus showing he did not rejoice over his errand), procured his respectful hearing from the Ninevites. They apparently hoped that, if God could pardon Jonah on repentance, he might also pardon themselves. Otherwise they would have been destroyed without warning.

God could have saved Jonah without using the "sea-monster"; but this method was chosen to typify Christ's burial and resurrection, and it is hard to imagine how they could have been more efficiently symbolised. Before Jonah was thrown overboard, he offered his life to save the sailors—a type of how Christ offered His for sinners. The coincidence is striking, but of course must not be pressed too far, as Jonah was guilty, while Christ was innocent. Similarly, the repentance which followed Jonah's preaching after his preservation resembles that which followed the preaching of the Gospel after Christ's resurrection.

Space forbids my discussing why Jonah avoided his mission, or why he wished the ruin of Nineveh. "R. R." may find both explained in good commentaries.

(Rev.) Henry J. Alcock, M.A.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Watts, "Will Christianity Survive the Twentieth Century?"

ALDGATE PUBLIC BATHS (Goulston-street): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Use and Abuse of the Bible."

BATTERSEA BATHS (Latchmere-road, Battersea): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Missions to the Heathen."

PADDINGTON BATHS (Queen's-road, Bayswater, W.): December 4, at 8, G. W. Foote, "Secularism and the Bible."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "Ideals Visible only to the High-minded."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, H. Snell, "The Human Element in the Bible."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall); 6.30, Miss L. M. Ker, "Ruskin and Tolstoi."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, A lecture—Particulars in *Daily Mail*, Dec. 1.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class, Mr. M'Gregor; 6.30, Social Meeting.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, T. Parris—11, "The Evolution of the State"; 6.30, "Creator and Creation: A Reply to Dr. Dallinger."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture—for subject see *Football Echo* of Saturday next.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. Percy Ward—11, "A Christian Ghost Story"; 3, "Thomas Paine"; 6.30, "Who Made the Devil?" Tea at 5. December 3 and 4, at 8, Debate between Will Phillips and H. Percy Ward on "Is Spiritualism True?"

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Mr. Gorrill, Descriptive lecture on the Paris Exhibition. With lantern illustrations.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "Ethics: Natural and Supernatural"; 8, Committee Meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—December 2, Battersea Baths.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—December 2, Manchester; 3 and 4, Debate at Manchester.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

Vol. XX.—No. 49. Sunday, December 9, 1900. Price Twopence.

Wilson Barrett and Colonel Ingersoll.

We did not know that Wilson Barrett took himself so seriously. It appears that he is something more than an artist—or perhaps something less. He has a mission in the world, and it is a moral mission. He preaches from the stage instead of from the pulpit. His object is to make people feel and think as they ought to, and to render the theatre the greatest power in the world for good. It was all a mistake to suppose that he took up those Roman plays in order to trade on sentimental superstitions with regard to the early Christians, or to wear the toga and display his anatomy. He has been explaining the matter to a representative of the Newcastle *Evening Leader*. "I would make the stage," he says, "a vehicle of good for others, and for myself too; and not of good alone, but of good united to interest and to thought—deep, earnest thought." The interviewer asked him whether that was the mission of the drama. "Not the mission of the drama, perhaps," he replied, "but at any rate it is my mission." This is clear enough, and some will regard it as very satisfactory. But others will shake their heads—with something in them. They will scarcely be able to believe that this gentleman is commissioned and equipped by nature (or providence) for deep, earnest thought. They have an opinion that he shines chiefly in robust melodrama, where the situations, rather than the acting, make people "feel." They fancy, too, that his own writing, as in "The Sign of the Cross," is full of stilted platitudes and shoddy rhetoric, which he probably mistakes for poetry. By no means can they take him at his own estimate. They recognise, however, that he can afford to smile at their "depreciation," for he has the great, ignorant, emotional public with him, and their late-found patronage has lifted him out of semi-bankruptcy into affluence.

Mr. Barrett is proud of the fact that Ruskin was greatly interested in "Claudian." "The letter he wrote me," the author-actor says, "on its production is amongst my most valued possessions. The altruism of the play appealed to him, especially the dying for an ideal." Now the great John Ruskin was undoubtedly a man of genius, but he was not without his eccentricities, and this was one of them. The "altruism" of "Claudian" is extremely difficult to discover. The hero of that play is strongly reminiscent of Manfred. He poses and spouts, and overflows with self-sympathy. Everything is directed towards his "spiritual" interests. Earthquakes and massacres, involving the death of thousands, are perpetrated with consummate recklessness in order to prepare his immortal soul for the kingdom of heaven. He advances to glory along a road of ruin. Provided he gets home all right at the finish, the fate of others, who are equally immortal, and perhaps equally valuable, is a matter of superlative indifference. It was an aberration on Ruskin's part to see altruism, and idealism, and all the rest of it, in such an egotistical performance.

It appears that Mr. Barrett wrote "The Sign of the Cross" for a definite religious purpose. It happened in this way—in his own words:—

> "It was my own play, the result of much previous thought and consideration, and of a desire to get something to oppose the materialistic tendency of the day. Perhaps the first idea came to me during a visit to America, where, at the Southern Hotel, St. Louis, I met Colonel Robert Ingersoll, a charming, clever man, whose atheistical lectures crammed every theatre or hall where they were given; and so witty was Colonel Ingersoll that these places resounded again and again with laughter at the clever attacks he made on the supernatural side of Christianity. It was at this time that I began to think if it were not possible to write a play to counteract the mischief he was doing; for unless we can get anything better than Christianity why try to pull down the hope and comfort of this world of ours?"

Why on earth did not Mr. Barrett tell us all this before? We should have understood him then. His aspiration is to figure at the front in the noble army of infidel-slayers. He has for many years been fighting Colonel Ingersoll. Against the great Freethought orator's wit he opposes the solemn nonsense of "The Sign of the Cross." Ingersoll made people laugh. "Very well," says Mr. Barrett, "come to me, and I will make you cry." Tears are trumps. Infidelity shall be snivelled out of the theatre, and wet pocket-handkerchiefs shall lie on bosoms filled with the love of Christ.

Really, it is *too* funny. Look at Ingersoll's portrait, and then at Mr. Barrett's; read Ingersoll's lectures, and then Mr. Barrett's play; and ask yourself whether there is any equality between these antagonists. Is it not a battle between a giant and a dwarf? Ingersoll could make people laugh; yes, but not *at* him. He could also make them cry. But he did not elicit the facile tears of cheap sentimentality. His hearers were surprised into the melting mood by the sudden, swift touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. The hatred of cruelty, the scorn of injustice, the loathing of hypocrisy, the indignation at bigotry, the acclaim of courage, the love of tenderness, the sympathy with unmerited distress, the grief over the sufferings of women and children, the yearning towards strong men fighting forlorn hopes in the deepest adversity—all followed the irresistible magic of his appeal.

What "hope and comfort" did Ingersoll try to "pull down"—as Mr. Barrett elegantly puts it? The one thing above all others with which he warred was the Christian doctrine of everlasting hell. Is this the "hope and comfort" that Mr. Barrett seeks to re-establish? Ingersoll never denied a future life. He said he did not know. And we venture to think that Mr. Barrett is in the same position. We also think he will cling to this life as long as he can, and postpone his voyage to the next world until he is forcibly put on board the boat for Port Salvation.

We gather that Mr. Barrett is supporting "the supernatural side of Christianity." Well, it certainly needs all the support it can get; and when the actors join the parsons in its defence, it must be in a very parlous condition.

G. W. Foote.

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Josephus and Christ.

In October last two articles of mine appeared in these columns showing the nature of myths and the unhistorical character of the New Testament story of Christ. In a letter to the *Freethinker* of October 21, Mr. C. Vaughan took exception to certain of my conclusions; but he did not deny my general affirmation—namely, that the principal passage in Josephus's writings, in which a reference is made to Jesus Christ, was a forgery. My reason for not replying at the time to Mr. Vaughan's letter was that it did not meet my objection to the Christian claim; that the existence of the Christ of the Gospels was amply proved by the testimony of historians who wrote about the period when Christ is supposed to have lived. I should not notice the gentleman's criticism even now had I not been asked to do so by several friends. My silence would not have been out of any disrespect to the writer of the letter, but simply because his remarks do not affect the position I take upon the subject. My contention was, and is, that there is no evidence that any secular writer of the first century refers to the Jesus called Christ. In support of my allegation I dealt, among other things, with the supposed testimony of Josephus, showing that, according to even Christian writers, the celebrated passage in his history where Christ is mentioned is an interpolation. "If," says Mr. Vaughan, "this was the *only* mention, it might be considered a final refutation. But this passage does not stand alone. Josephus also mentions James as the brother of J. C., and also devotes a chapter to John the Baptist."

Now, it is evident that Mr. Vaughan has not directed his attention sufficiently to literature bearing upon the subject. Had he done so, he would have known that the references to James and John in the writings of Josephus are also doubtful and destitute of historical accuracy. Before, however, furnishing proof of this, let me remind my critic that he confounds the name of Jesus with that of Christ. In my previous article I stated that it was not my intention to dispute that a man by the name of Jesus lived two thousand years ago. Josephus refers to more than one person of the same name who lived about that time. My contention was that there is no historical evidence that the Christ (which really means the anointed) who is professed to be believed in by Christians ever existed. But supposing the James in question existed, and had a brother by the name of Jesus, it does not follow that he was the virgin-born miracle-worker, Christ of the Gospels, who was looked upon as something more than a mere "man and a brother." Then as to John the Baptist. Such a preacher might have existed among others; but the point is: Did Josephus mention a John the Prophet, who is said to have foretold the coming of Jesus the Messiah, the restorer of the Jewish nation, and the deliverer of its people from the Roman yoke? Besides, as the principal passage in Josephus's writings referring to Christ is an *admitted* forgery, it is not improbable that the passages wherein James and John are named are also interpolations, inserted by some Christian at a subsequent period to support the first forgery. Further, what does Mr. Vaughan mean in saying: "Thus we have *three* allusions to the early history of Christianity"? There is no allusion whatever made to Christianity in the passages referred to. Before the existence of Christ and Christianity can be historically proved it must be shown that early secular writers refer to a person such as the New Testament describes, who was born without a human father, who performed the acts related of him in the Gospels, who died on the cross, who rose from the dead, and who is now sitting at the right hand of the God of Israel in the Christian's heaven. This is the proof required; let him produce it who can.

Mr. Vaughan says: "It would, therefore, appear that the majority is still two to one against Mr. Watts, and it would be interesting to know how he proposes to dispose of the two references I have given." Here it should be noted that, if the passages found in Josephus in reference to James and John were genuine, they would not be personal evidence in favor of the events recorded, but only hearsay. The passage as to John states that some of the Jews thought the destruction of Herod's army was owing to his having slain John, called the Baptist. The reason assigned for John's death is that Herod feared that his (John's) influence would lead to rebellion; hence it was thought advisable to put him to death to prevent his causing mischief. This is a very different story to that given of the same event in the Gospels. Evan Powell Meredith, who says, in his *Prophet of Nazareth*, that he "sees adequate reasons to conclude that the passage in Josephus referring to John is a clumsy *forgery*," writes thus:—

> "Josephus, according to Christian chronology, was only about thirty years older than John; and, at the time he wrote, some of John's converts and disciples must be alive; for out of the many thousands he baptised a sect must have been formed; or, at least, a great number must, through life, have adhered to his doctrines, and been imitated by their children. Still, Josephus makes no mention of any of his adherents. Nor does he allude to the deputation of Jewish priests and Levites sent to John by the great council of the nation to demand his authority for baptising (John 1). But what is still more singular, as evincing the spurious character of this passage, is that Josephus does not mention either John or his followers when systematically treating of the religious sects that existed in Judea, which he does both in his *Jewish Wars* and *Antiquities* before the passage in question occurs. If he knew anything of John or of his adherents, and if John was such an important personage as he is described in the Gospels, and even in the supposed spurious passage under notice, influencing the whole nation so as to be able at any time to persuade it to rise in rebellion, and making the governor of this nation regard him with awe, and to kill him, at last, from fear of his influence—if, we say, the Jewish historian knew of these remarkable things—and it is impossible for them to have existed without his knowledge—he would undoubtedly have given a detailed account of John when treating of the other religious teachers of the Jews. Instead of this, we find only a casual notice taken of him. The most direct and positive proof of the forgery of this passage is that it makes Herod send John to the citadel of Machærus, which was not only not within his own tetrarchy, but not within the Roman domains. It was in the possession of Aretas, the king of Arabia; so that, if Herod sent John to this castle, he would have no power over him, either to kill him or preserve his life. To make it still more unlikely that he should have sent John to the fort of another monarch, Aretas had long ago been inimical to Herod, having had a quarrel with him about the boundaries of Gemalitus. Aretas and Herod's father, also, had always been inveterate foes. We may, therefore, be certain that Herod never imprisoned John in a castle which was in the possession of another king, and that a foe; and, further, that Josephus would never be so contradictory as to say that he did so. Consequently, the passage about John must be an interpolation, foisted into the text with the view of making Josephus bear testimony that John the Baptist flourished in the time and country of Herod the Tetrarch. But so clumsy is the forgery that it utterly falsifies the Gospel testimony regarding John."

Now, the advocate for a historical Christ is placed in this dilemma: he must either abandon the story as given in Josephus, or he must disbelieve the New Testament account. Personally, I credit neither, believing, with Judge Strange, that this passage in Josephus about John the Baptist is "as clearly traceable to Christian hands interpolating the record of Josephus as is the case in any of the other instances."

The reference to James, "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ," is open to the same objection that has been urged against the genuineness of the other passages found in the writings of Josephus. The Rev. Dr. Giles considers the passage "incomplete and suspicious." He says:—

> "The insertion of the words, *who is called Christ*..... may be due to the ignorance, or even the piety, of some Christian annotator" (*Apostolic Records*, pp. 285-6).

Charles B. Waite, A.M., in his *History of the Christian Religion*, says that "commentators have not been able to decide" whether the James mentioned was "the brother of the Lord." "Some evangelical writers have been inclined to let this passage go with the other as a forgery" (pp. 34-5). Judge Strange, in his work, *The Sources and Development of Christianity*, writes thus:—

> "That the passage is a fabricated one is also evidenced by the circumstance that at one time it stood in the account of the *Wars* verbatim as we find it in the *Antiquities*..... The passage being withdrawn amounts to an admission

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of its spuriousness, and the whole action of the insertion and the withdrawal exhibits the unscrupulous manner in which the records left us by Josephus have been tampered with" (pp. 22-3).

Thus it appears to me that Mr. Vaughan's statement that there are "*three* allusions to the history of Christianity" is not supported by historical fact.

Mr. Vaughan says the passages referring to James and John "are mentioned by Origen." Supposing this were true, it proves nothing in favor of my critic's contention. Origen is said to have written in the third century, and how his testimony can be of any evidential value as to who wrote in the first century I fail to see. But it is well known to readers of primitive Christian history that many of Origen's statements were "open to suspicion." It is a significant fact that Origen, in his discussion with Celsus, never once refers to the alleged testimony of Josephus to Christ. On the contrary, he admits the lack of such testimony, and tries to account for the silence of the Jewish historian.

Sufficient has now been said, I hope, in reply to Mr. Vaughan's letter. Whether or not he will be satisfied remains to be seen. CHARLES WATTS.

Christianity and Civilisation.—II.

THE QUESTION OF MORALITY.

(Continued from page 757.)

IN my last article I pointed out how utterly misleading were the statements so often made that Roman society was destitute of any satisfactory moral teaching prior to the introduction of Christianity, as also the kindred charges of Roman demoralisation. The truth is that the only authorities that can be cited in proof of the latter statement are the writings of satirists or moralists, who naturally dwelt upon the evils they sought to abolish, and not upon those aspects of Roman life that were secure from their condemnation. No serious student of Roman civilisation would accept the scandal-mongering of Suetonius, the epigrams of Martial, or the satires of Juvenal—from whom most of the statements are borrowed—as being fair pictures of the life of their times. "Satire," as a clerical historian remarks, "can never be accepted as a fair portraiture of social manners. It dwells only on the bad side of life, and ignores the brighter and the nobler scenes";* and, with the remains of Roman writings and of Roman greatness before us, we can scarcely doubt that the bright side was there for those who sought it. Certainly the letters of Pliny the Younger introduce us to an entirely different world than that pilloried by Juvenal; and Pliny was no satirist, but a plain, cultured, observant man of the world. His letters show that, with all the vice of Roman civilisation, there was yet a much higher spirit abroad—a spirit which manifested itself in the softening of harsh laws, the growth of a loftier ethic, the amelioration of the lot of the slave, and an improvement in the condition of woman.

But the myth that Roman life was utterly corrupt is only one side of the myth that Christianity gave this corrupt society new moral ideals and a new moral birth. It is, as Mr. Farrer remarks in his excellent *Paganism and Christianity*, "one of the commonest traditions that has acquired some semblance of truth by persistent reiteration." On what evidence does this belief rest? Simply and entirely on the statements of Christian writers themselves. To the Pagan writers no such austere morality was evident. Marcus Aurelius, a moralist of the sternest type—classed by Renan among the world's noblest characters—was not struck by their moral culture, although he was by their obstinacy and fanaticism. Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, Celsus, and Lucian saw in Christianity only a stupid and evil superstition. And it is, to say the least of it, remarkable that not *one* of the best Pagan writers or rulers observed the moral excellence of Christians. Not only are the witnesses to early Christian purity confined to Christians, but even they discover the greatest purity in the most distant periods, which are precisely those of which our information is scantiest. Where we know little or nothing of Christians, they are said to have been leading pure lives; directly we begin to have precise information concerning them, then, as Christian writers testify, "to represent the Christian Church as ideally pure or stainlessly perfect would be altogether a mistake.....Hatred and party spirit, rancor and misrepresentation, treachery and superstition, innovating audacity and unspiritual retrogression, were among them as among us."*

Putting on one side the grave misconduct in the Christian Churches evidenced by St. Paul's admonitions, the broad and damning fact remains that our first geniune historic acquaintance with Christians introduces us not to a body of lofty moral teachers, exercising a restraining and purifying influence on the world around them, but to a crowd of religious fanatics, whose conduct was no better than that of their fellows, and often worse. Tertullian, writing in the latter part of the second century, meets the charges of misconduct against Christians by the somewhat curious defence that, while it is true of some, it is not true of all—a defence that practically admits the justice of the charges made. And in his own writings, that are addressed specially to Christian communities, he dipicts exactly the same vices and portrays precisely the same types that are pictured by Juvenal or Seneca.† A few years later Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, rebukes exactly the same faults—and with the same result. He describes the Christian world, laity and clergy, as thinking chiefly of money and pleasure. There is neither devotion nor faith among the clergy; many of them leave their duties to engage in mercantile traffic, while false swearing, evil speaking, and dissolute habits were common to all classes.‡

The growing conviction of the sanctity of the celibate life led also to much open and secret immorality. Not satisfied with the ordinary practice of celibacy, the monks "formed connections with those women who had made vows of perpetual chastity; and it was an ordinary thing for an ecclesiastic to admit one of these fair saints to the participation of his bed, but still under the most solemn declarations that nothing passed in this commerce that was contrary to the rules of chastity and virtue."§ Tertullian declares that the desire of enjoying the reputation of virginity led to much secret immorality and infanticide—a declaration that carries conviction on its face.

The significant part of such statements, which might be multiplied indefinitely, is that they refer to the Christian population at the earliest times of which we have any authentic knowledge concerning it, and not to a much later period, when it might be urged in extenuation that it had grown corrupt. The truth is that morality, as ordinarily understood, was not the prime object of the first centuries, and the early Church was anything but a society of ethical propaganda. Antinomianism, the doctrine that the elect were freed from all law, legal and moral, and that none of their actions could be deemed sinful, no matter what their character, was ever present in the early Church, as it has been at later important religious revivals. Prodicians, Adamites, Eutrychites, to name only a few sects, were all antinomistic, some of them heating their churches in order to attend service in a state of nudity (see Renan's *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 71, and Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, ch. 2). Mosheim may well remark, in answer to the question, What is a bad director in point of morals?: "If by such a person be meant one who has no determinate notion of the nature and limits of the duties incumbent on Christians, no clear and distinct ideas of virtue and vice.....then it must be confessed that the title belongs indisputably to many of the fathers."

When we take the Christian period at a later date, and inquire as to the effect of Christian teaching then, matters become immeasurably worse. Far from effecting any improvement, every advance in the power of Christianity seems to have been accompanied by the presence of a lower level of moral degradation. Of the state of affairs in the fourth century Gibbon says that "the Christians had forgotten the spirit of the Gospel, and the Pagans had imbibed the spirit of the Church.

* Rev. W. W. Capes, *Early Roman Empire*, p. 214.

* Dean Farrar, *Early Days of Christianity*, p. 59.
† See Cruttwell's *Literary History of Early Christianity*, p. 584.
‡ See his treatise, *On the Lapsed*.
§ Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History*, Century III., pt. ii., c. 2.

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In private families the sentiments of nature were extinguished by the blind fury of zeal and revenge; the majesty of the laws was violated or abused; the cities of the East were stained with blood."* But Gibbon was not a Christian, and his testimony may be biassed. Let us, then, take the evidence of two Christian writers, St. Jerome and Salvianus, Bishop of Marseilles, both belonging to the fifth century. The language of both is rather too blunt for literal repetition, so I will give their indictment as summarised by Mr. H. C. Lea in the following passage :—

> "Nothing can be conceived more utterly licentious and depraved than the whole framework of society as described by him [Salvianus], with such details as preclude us from believing that holy indignation or pious sensibility led him to exaggerate the outlines or darken the shades of the picture.....Unbridled lust and unblushing indecency admitted no sanctity in the marriage-tie. The rich and powerful established harems, in the recesses of which their wives lingered, forgotten, neglected, and despised..... The poor aped the vices of the rich, and hideous depravity reigned supreme and invited the vengeance of heaven..... Nor does Salvianus confine his denunciations to Gaul and Spain. Africa and Italy are represented as even worse, the prevalence of unnatural crimes lending a deeper disgust to the rivalry in iniquity.....What hope, he asks, can there be for the people when even in the Church itself the most diligent search can scarce discover one chaste amid so many thousands?"†

The indictment of Jerome, as summarised by Dill in his important work, *Roman Society in the Last Days of the Western Empire*, is equally sweeping :—

> "Among all classes of the clergy corruption prevailed. The evils of seduction and captation became so grave that, in an edict addressed to Pope Damasus, the Emperor Valentinian I. sternly prohibited monks and ecclesiastics from entering the houses of widows and orphan wards.....The passion for wealth invaded all ranks of the clergy. Many were engaged in amassing fortunes in trade. They will perform the most disgusting and menial offices for some heirless lady on her deathbed.....The picture which St. Jerome draws of female society is so repulsive that one would gladly believe it to be exaggerated. Men and women, vowed to perpetual chastity, lived under the same roof, brazening out the miserable imposture of superhuman purity under impossible conditions" (pp. 112, 113).

In fact, it matters little whether we take Pagan or Christian testimony, the result is the same. So far as the latter is concerned, purity in life is generally claimed for *preceding* generations; when dealing with their own times, there is an endless lamentation as to its impurity. Let the reader bear in mind, too, that the testimony I have quoted covers the period during which our knowledge of early Christian life is most exact, and it will be seen what slight grounds there are for assuming that Christianity effected any moral improvement in the lives of the people. There is small wonder that Dean Milman concludes that "in a great degree, while the Roman world became Christian in outward worship and in faith, it remained heathen, or worse than heathen, in its better times, as to beneficence, gentleness, purity, social virtues, humanity, and peace."

Not only do the purely Christian ages show a marked increase in special vices such as those cited above, but in nearly all the constituent elements of a sane civilisation there was a weakening also. Let us take, for example, the case of public education. The arrangements made by the Roman Government under the Empire to secure educational facilities were extensive and admirable. Universities for the higher education were scattered all over the Empire. There was a great law school in Berytus, a University at Edessa, at Constantinople, at Trèves, Lyons, Toulouse, and numerous other places. Rome alone possessed twenty schools of a public character as early as the days of the first Cæsar. Vespasian, Hadrian, and the Antonines gave large sums of money for the encouragement of education, and Alexander Severus founded numerous bursaries for poor scholars. Space prevents my dealing with this matter at length; but is there any need to point out that it was under Christian rule that this universal system of education died out, or that in the eighth century Karl the Great had to force the clergy to open schools of the most elementary character?

* *Decline and Fall*, ch. 25.
† *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, pp. 85-6.

In the decay of civic virtue there is the same lesson to be read. Duty to the State, even to the point of dying in its behalf, was the ideal constantly before the Roman mind. From the first Christianity opposed this ideal. The early Christian leaders were emphatic in their teaching that no true believer could share directly or indirectly in the civil or military administration of the Empire. Well may Renan say that "during the third century Christianity sucked ancient society like a vampire, drawing out all its forces and creating that general enervation against which the patriotic emperors vainly struggled"; and that "the triumph of Christianity was the extinction of civil life for a thousand years."* Lecky, too, desirous as he is to find good in Christianity, is driven to the admission that the Christian ages "rank immeasurably below the best Pagan civilisations in civic and patriotic virtues, in the love of liberty, in the number and splendor of the great character they produced, in the dignity and beauty of the type of character they formed."† The truth of the statement is clearly seen in the types of character that have come down to us. Throughout the centuries the social reformer, seeking for examples to nerve his arm and encourage his followers, has gone back to these ancient models. We have gone to them because in no other period of European history was municipal life so well developed. "Local senates met in council, magistrates were chosen by popular election, and patriotism, though confined within narrow limits, was still intense. The inscriptions which are found in every part of the old Roman world, as well as the ruins of the great works which here and there are left, show us how real and widespread was the public spirit."‡ Rome gave the world, if not perfect specimens of civic life, at least an indication of what might be. What have the Christian centuries bequeathed in this matter? Naught but the figures of half-mad monks, shunning all human intercourse, and living the life of beasts, or of a priesthood, sensual and grasping to a degree, reddening the streets of city after city with blood shed in settlement of theological discussions, and permitting the world to sink back into barbarism and decay. Yet we are coolly informed by Professor Orr that it was Christianity which entered "as a regenerating principle into ancient society." Why, then, did Roman civilisation perish?

C. Cohen.

(To be continued.)

The School Board Contest in Leicester.

To-morrow (Monday, December 3) the burgesses of Leicester will have the opportunity of voting on an issue which I have had the honor of laying clearly and definitely before the town: Are they in favor of secularising the whole instruction given in Board-schools, and of directing all education towards the supreme end of good citizenship? Thirty years have passed since the establishment of School Boards, and not until this election has Leicester been asked to declare its mind upon so vital a problem.

I am interested in every detail of school-work, but I deliberately confined my program to this one point of Secular Moral Education. The people will speak for that, or against it. At each of my five meetings I have expressed my general approval of the Liberal methods of staffing and furnishing the schools; but I have made the exclusion of Bible-reading and the substitution of a rational ethics the main and unmistakable burden of my plea. On the whole, I am satisfied that the bulk of the electorate has fairly well seen the issue. Our posters have been multitudinous. My speeches have been adequately reported. The editors of four local papers have inserted all the letters which I wrote to them on the subject of my program. My friends have diligently distributed nearly 40,000 copies of my address from door to door, and I desire most sincerely to acknowledge the patience which they displayed in addressing thousands of envelopes, and delivering circulars along the streets, often under depressing conditions of rain,

* *Marcus Aurelius*, pp. 337-336.
† *History of European Morals*, ii., 16.
‡ W. W. Capes, *Early Empire*, p. 188.

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slush, and darkness. It has all been volunteer labor. When I thanked one of these loyal missionaries after he had tramped the town for many weary hours, he answered rightly: "I am not doing it for you; I am doing it for a principle."

What was the principle? In my address I asked that the schools should be entirely secular, and that character should be made the chief aim of school life, the children being taught on the following lines:—

> "*Self-respect;* temperance in eating, drinking, expenditure, clothing, speech, and amusements; courage and perseverance in the pursuit of useful objects; prudence, and modesty.
>
> "*Truthfulness* in speech, action, home-life, and business dealings; value of scientific truth; careful judgment of facts and persons; respect for the opinions of other people, and especially of minorities.
>
> "*Kindness* towards members of one's family, playmates, the infirm, and animals; good manners and clean speech at home and in public; sympathy for suffering as illustrated by lessons on hospitals, lifeboats, fire-brigades, lighthouses, institutions for the blind, deaf and dumb, etc.
>
> "*Work and Duty;* the duty of all healthy men and women to join the production of wealth by their personal labor of muscle or brain.
>
> "*Society and the State;* intelligent study, not of the details of British battles and trifling incidents in the lives of kings, but of the history of mankind, and of all the wonderful works of the human race in the past, inventions, literature, and the arts; the nature of justice, personal and civic; the principles of intellectual and political liberty; the functions of the State and the duties of citizenship; the blessings of co-operation and international peace; the beauties of art and nature. And this civic instruction should include the principle of the social and political equality of the sexes."

The local press received this proposal with a marked respect. Not a single criticism has appeared; not a single candidate has fastened upon a word or phrase to which objection might be taken. One editor referred to the program as embodying the ideals of "some of the greatest thinkers of the time." He probably said this because Mr. Frederic Harrison was good enough to let me publish a letter of commendation. Mr. Allanson Picton also did me great service by sending me an open letter, in which he rebuked the Nonconformists for disloyalty to their oft-professed principle of disassociating religion from State-aid. But the Liberal journals entirely ignored this communication from their old and esteemed M.P. Another editor described my scheme as "excellent." A third observed that with many things in my plan he cordially agreed. A fourth believed I had many "admirable ideas." All this sounded like soft music and the cooing of doves. But not one journal suggested that people ought to vote for me.

It was not long, of course, before the Bible came up for discussion. But I had given the orthodox very little opportunity for attack. I made no assault on the Bible. I said that it offered a sectarian basis of morality, inasmuch as it did not meet the views of Jews, Unitarians, Catholics, Agnostics, and others who contributed to the support of the municipal schools; and I also said that on large areas of ethical practice the Bible had nothing whatever to teach. In other words, I affirmed, not that the present moral training was bad, but that it was inadequate. This again put the editors in a difficulty. They perfectly well knew that the instruction given under the system of Bible-reading must be piecemeal and disconnected. They could see I had a logical and liberal plan to offer in place of the theological lessons. They attempted only a feeble reply. The leading paper kept repeating that the Bible-reading had satisfied the parents of Leicester for more than twenty years; but it carefully refrained from asserting that the editorial mind was satisfied. I answered that, on purely educational grounds, it was absurd to think children could understand passages from any literature without suitable comment, and that this comment could be crammed into the bare allowance of fifteen minutes. That is the measure of the devotion of the Leicester School Board to its religion. It allots a quarter of an hour for a hymn, prayers, Bible-reading, and explanation of the passage read. I maintained that to treat the Bible, or Shakespeare, or Ruskin, or any other author, in such a manner amounted to contempt. On the other hand, I advocated that the teacher should be encouraged to draw illustrations from the full range of literature and history of all ages and nations, including the Bible. The leading journal snapped at that "including the Bible," and wanted to make out that I and the Progressives occupied the same ground. Of course, I had to rejoin that I stood for something vastly different; that the great moral ideas were those of temperance, veracity, gentleness, and justice, and that these possessed a grandeur quite independent of the existence of the Bible.

Only one man has been rude. He penned a letter—anonymous, as usual in such cases—to one of the papers, suggesting that I had dishonestly concealed my Atheism under cover of an ethical program. It so happens that I have frequently written letters to that very journal, dealing with my Freethought convictions, and always undersigned with my name and address. This I pointed out to him, and also invited him to attend a public meeting, and question me as he thought fit. He never came. I have only had one opponent at a meeting. He spoke for nearly twenty minutes, begging me not to rob him of his Bible, and entertaining us with a minute account of the affairs of his soul and his household, and full particulars of the devoted way in which he took a cup of tea up to his wife at half-past four every morning. I have heard of several Churchmen who mean to vote for me. One of these came into the Committee-room the other night, swore he would give me fifteen votes, and wound up with inviting me to accept a libation of whiskey. I accepted his kind offer of votes, and declined the glass.

Only one man outside our Secular circle has prominently supported me on the platform. That was the Rev. W. Whitaker, minister of the Free Christian (Unitarian) Church. He is a Theist, and I am not; but that is no matter; he is a straightforward, courageous man.

Whether I am elected or not, this much is certain. The town has been stirred, and the Liberal advocates of the sectarian Compromise have been made to feel uneasy at their weakness of political principle.

F. J. Gould.

P.S.—The result was declared on Tuesday. The number to be elected was fifteen, and there were twenty candidates. I was successful, being second on the poll. I heartily thank all friends, including the *Freethinker*, for their support.—F. J. G.

There's Nothing Like Leather!

"The London and Foreign Bible Society was, not long ago, jubilant over the great demand for Bibles in an inland district of China. But later on came the gruesome discovery that the Word was being freely used as sole (not soul) 'leather.'"—*London Paper.*

A snob gets his living by saving our "souls"
And the rest of our feet from the weather;
The cash in his pockets he jingles and rolls,
And he murmurs, "There's nothing like leather!"

Men of God get their living by frightening "jays"
With those mythical regions the "nether";
"There is nothing," they say, "like our creed"—for it pays—
It's a case of "There's nothing like leather!"

The "work" of the parsons is heavily priced,
Though that "work" is as light as a feather;
They say to their dupes, "There is nothing like Christ"—
To themselves, "There is nothing like leather!"

They trade in their Bibles at home and abroad,
And they gather the "shekels" together;
"There is nothing," they say, "like the Word of the Lawd."
(O there's nothing, there's nothing like leather!)

In China they've lately been doing some "biz."
Where the "heathen" are dwelling together;
They've been selling God's Word—for there's nothing like His—
(O there's nothing, there's nothing like leather!)

They were jumping for joy, for they sold such a lot,
All their hearts were as light as a feather,
Till they found that those Bibles were purchased—Great Scott!
By some "snobs" for the sake of the leather!

Those Bibles were sold for the sake of their "souls"
(And the nests of the parsons to feather),
But the "soles" of the Chinamen's boots were in holes,
And for patching there's nothing like leather!

They used up the covers in which they were bound
For protecting their "soles" from the weather;
And those Chinamen showed common sense that was sound,
For, of course, "there is nothing like leather!"

Ess Jay Bee.

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Acid Drops.

OSCAR WILDE—who was once famous, and then became infamous—is dead; and it is reported that he was received, shortly before his decease, into the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church. According to the New Testament, there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance. We suppose this is true, considering who said it; and if it be so, there must be a perfect beanfeast in heaven on the present occasion.

Oscar Wilde was not without brains, but he never had any character, in the proper sense of the word. He was a most insincere posturer, and the newspapers degrade themselves by printing a selection of his "epigrams and paradoxes." For the most part, they are nonsensical things said seriously, or brutal things said politely. "There are only two kinds of women, the plain and the colored." Well, that is mere insolence, and very vulgar insolence too. Fancy a man saying this, and with a certain acceptance, in the land of Shakespeare!

Judge Bacon should not play the fool—or the bigot—in his own court. A witness came forward there recently with a smiling face, and claimed to affirm on the ground that he had no religion. "Don't smile," Judge Bacon said, "as if you were proud of the fact; it only further shows your empty mind." The witness might have retorted that Judge Bacon's mind was perhaps not empty, but certainly ill-furnished.

Men of God sometimes let out the truth, and the truth is often unpleasant and damaging. The Rev. W. J. Robins, of Cockfield, gave the Bury St. Edmunds Free Church Council some of his experiences as a Nonconformist minister. Religion and drink, he found, went wonderfully well together in certain villages. "Young and old men," he said, "would go and sit under the sound of the Gospel—and he had even seen tears trickling down their cheeks as the Word had touched them, and they would leave the sanctuary and go and sit in a public-house until closing hours on the Sunday evening. This was not a thing that happened once, but Sunday by Sunday." And why not? "Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." So says the Bible, and those villagers were doing it.

We have said that a Christian who wants to keep the Sabbath strictly holy should go to bed on Saturday night, and get up on Monday morning, and pay a Jew to turn him over. Something like this idea was present to the mind of a member of the Legislative Council of Victoria. Being accused of eating hot potatoes on Sunday, he claimed that he did not violate the Fourth Commandment, as they were cooked by an Atheist who lived next door.

A Wigan tradesman has found out from the Bible that the proper Lord's Day is the Sabbath—not the first day of the week, but the seventh. Accordingly, he has announced that his business premises will be closed at sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday, and will "continue open on Sunday." We suspect, however, that the Wigan Protestants generally will fail to recognise his right of private judgment. They will probably set the dogs of law at him, and make him read the Bible as they do.

"Why People Stay Away from Church" is being discussed in the Hull *Daily Mail*. All sorts of answers are given; but the only real answer is that people don't want to go.

A party of Christian whites lynched a negro at Limon, Col., for ravishing and killing an eleven-year-old white girl. They burned him at the stake. Still, they remembered that he was a Christian, though a black one. So they provided him with a Bible, which he read as he walked to the scene of his execution.

"God is love" were the last words of Richard Gardner, a devout negro who died in Columbus, O., November 9. Gardner had read the Bible all night, and had it with him at the time of his demise, being interrupted in the perusal of the same by Warden Derby, of the Ohio State Prison, who turned on the electric current. On the day before his death the deceased conducted a religious meeting in the jail, at which he related that heaven had been revealed to him. It was by the ravishing and murdering of a little girl that Gardner made his calling and electrocution sure.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The New York Presbytery has narrowly missed throwing its creed into the melting-pot. The vote for Revision was seventy-one to seventy-one; but the Rev. Dr. Wylie, who had voted as a member, gave a casting vote as Moderator, and defeated the motion—for the time. The world *does* move when Presbyterianism puts a leg forward.

Elisha the prophet should have lived to-day. He would then have been able to use the much-advertised "Tatcho." This might have stopped his baldness, and saved the lives of the school-children who laughed at his lack of hair.

We regret that Mr. Edward Leggatt, of West Ham, a member (we believe) of the local N. S. S. Branch, has been fined 40s. for selling literature and making a collection in Finsbury Park. He was very ill-advised, however, to do anything of the kind. The London County Council has made a reasonable arrangement, with which the N. S. S. and other bodies cheerfully concur. It would be intolerable if anybody and everybody were allowed to hawk papers and pamphlets in the parks, which are primarily intended for pleasure and recreation; and no less intolerable if anybody and everybody were allowed to beg money from the public in such places. A regulation has, therefore, been made that collections and the sale of literature shall be confined to the meetings held in a certain part of the parks, and that neither shall be for the private gain of individuals, but for the general objects of a recognised Society or for some special object of general benevolence. Of course there is *something* to be said against this regulation. There is something to be said against almost any regulation. But as this world goes we have only the choice of alternatives, and the present regulation is ever so much better than sheer chaos. All of us have a fondness for doing as we like, but it is clearly impossible for us to do so in public places. The parks are meant for all, and one man's liberty must not be a nuisance to his fellows. We hope Mr. Leggatt will see that he is contravening a necessary bye-law, which must be upheld.

Another letter on "Atheistic Lectures" appears in the *British Weekly*. Arnold Foster writes from Wuchang, China, stating that a copy of the *B. W.* has just reached him, in which a writer speaks of "the injury being done in England by 'infidel demagogues' delivering Atheistic lectures in the London parks." Arnold Foster thinks that, if "intelligent Christians with a ready wit" were to mix in some of these "assemblies of ill-informed people who gather round infidel lecturers," they might often be able to discomfit the orators with a few words. Arnold Foster must be very "ill-informed" himself, or he would know that Christians who think themselves intelligent, and possessed of a ready wit, *do* mix in the assemblies, and make the kind of effort he suggests. But it isn't the orator who is discomfited. It's the other party that goes away with the tail between his legs; and that's just where the Christian trouble comes in.

This sapient gentleman, whose absence in China may account for his want of knowledge, cites an instance of an "infidel lecturer" being silenced by ready wit. We give the account in his own words: "Some years ago a man of this type was declaiming after the manner of these orators to a number of passers-by, of whom few, perhaps, had the wit to answer his sophisms, though some may have suspected that they were sophisms. 'My friends,' said the lecturer, 'can you suppose that an Almighty God will ever hereafter punish for sin, as the Bible says he will, a poor puny creature like man—a being not six feet long? Can you imagine that such insignificant beings as we are deserve such punishment for anything we could do?' A friend of mine who happened to be passing by, and heard this remark, addressing the lecturer, inquired if he might ask a question. 'Certainly,' was the reply. 'I should like, then, to know,' said my friend, 'whether you suppose that an Almighty God is unable to make within the limits of six feet a moral being who deserves, as the penalty for his sin, the punishment which the Bible says the sinner will receive?' The lecturer had evidently not considered that aspect of his subject, and was not prepared with an answer."

We don't believe for a moment, supposing anything of the kind to have occurred, that the lecturer was unprepared with an answer. For the answer is so obvious. The lecturer had not raised the question whether Almighty God *could*, but whether he should or would. Mr. Foster's friend was, therefore, beside the mark with his question—as Mr. Foster himself is with his letter.

What lies—transparent lies—Christian missionaries do tell! The home missionaries are as bad as the foreign in the way of inventing palpable fiction. Take the following extract from the report of a public-house missionary engaged in connection with the London City Mission: "In one house," he says, "among the many men drinking at the bar was a soldier—a finely-built fellow, with decorations upon his breast. After a while I said to him: 'I perceive you are a soldier of the Queen, and one of England's defenders. As such you have received those emblems for distinguished service. How I wish you were also a soldier of Christ!' 'Who is He?' asked the soldier. 'I do not know Him, nor do I believe there is such a being.' After a long and earnest talk, the soldier answered with glistening eyes: 'Ah, you are right! You have pictured my case just as though you had known my history. My mother and father are very aged; they are Christians. He is a minister, and I am their bad boy. They do not know where I am, nor what I am

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doing. All my brothers and sisters are on the Lord's side, but I am wrong.' He promised to at once write to his parents, and, turning to the other men in the bar, said: 'What we have been told is right, men, and it is we who are on the wrong side. I can only say God bless you for coming to tell us wandering ones of God's love, and His willingness to forgive us. I know it is in answer to the prayers of my dear old father and mother.'"

Note the "glistening eyes." Everybody, according to these pious romancers, weeps when he is being converted. The process of conversion usually takes from about five minutes to half-an-hour. This is a proof at once of the power of the Gospel and the persuasiveness of the missionary—and some people may add, of the idiocy of the converted. But the fact is that nine out of ten of these stories are pure inventions. The missionary feels bound to show that he is doing something for his money, and, when the man of God is put to it, Ananias is a fool by the side of him.

Just as he began his sermon in church, the Rev. G. D. Pagden, rector of Cusop St. Mary, near Hay, Breconshire, was observed to stagger and fall, and, though medical aid was immediately sought, the doctor could only pronounce life to be extinct. The Lord might have allowed him to deliver his sermon.

George Lawton, who confessed at Liverpool to having married three women while his wife was alive, was sentenced to three years' penal servitude. He was once a church official, he said, and well aware of the sacredness of marriage. That was probably why he tried it so often.

In sentencing a groom at the Liverpool Assizes to three days' imprisonment for bigamy, Justice Darling remarked that the prisoner had on each occasion been married in a registry office, and "had not profaned any religious ceremony in what he had done." Annesley Kenealy writes to the *Morning Post* observing that it is quite a new notion that bigamists are punished for profaning a part of the Church service. Of course it is, and no other judge would have made use of words open to that interpretation. The appointment of Mr. Darling to the judicial bench was a great surprise. He seems to be doing his level best to show that it was also a sad mistake. What he lacks in dignity and legal acumen he endeavors to make up by bigotry of the worst description. We observe that the Court of Appeal has recently reversed one of the sapient decisions of this legal luminary.

Marquis Ito has been interviewed by Mr. Raymond Blathwayt. The "maker of modern Japan," in the course of the interview, asks: "What is Buddhism or Christianity but a superstition, and, therefore, a source of weakness rather than of strength to a nation?" The Marquis says he "does not regard Japan's almost universal Atheism as a source of danger." These statements have very much disturbed the *Christian*, which, however, does not seem able to do more than express its horror at their utterance.

Apropos of the death of Mr. W. P. Sinclair, of Liverpool, whose advocacy resulted in the adoption of section 5 of the Oaths Act, 1888 (51 and 52 Vic., cap. 46), the *Lancet* says: "The danger of kissing the book in coroners, police, sessions, or assize courts is greatly accentuated by the fact that medical witnesses are asked to do this after the book has already been kissed by numberless witnesses of the lowest classes, including, from time to time, some infected with loathsome disease. We have frequently pointed out before the dangers of the English mode of administering the oath, and have urged the adoption of the Scottish form. We could add much in favor of the latter form on the grounds of greater impressiveness and more solemnity, but we leave this to others."

The Scottish form of oath consists in holding the right hand aloft, and repeating a formula commencing with "I swear by Almighty God," etc. It doesn't strike the beholder as being particularly impressive and solemn, though it is less dangerous and disagreeable than kissing a greasy, much-besmirched volume. The best thing, of course, is to abolish the oath altogether. It has no efficacy in multitudes of cases. And the conscientious people with whom it *has* weight are just the people who might be relied upon to tell the truth on simple affirmation.

Someone writes to the *Examiner* marvelling at the "audacity" displayed by Canon Driver in his recent address at New College. The writer says it is absurd for Canon Driver to expect that others will remain where he has drifted to, without being swept on by the current to "bald theism" or farther still. Canon Driver, he says, "asks us to accept as our guide of faith, and as containing the revelation of God, a book which (according to him) is full of falsehoods and old wives' fables." And he adds: "Our Lord was perfectly right when he said that, if we believe not Moses's writings, neither shall we believe his words. Indeed, Christ, according to the critics, is a false witness. That is, he either told lies intentionally or in ignorance, and in either case he is unworthy of credit." That, no doubt, is the exact position. The wonder is that the believers have not found it out before.

In a late issue of the *Universe*, the Catholic newspaper, an advertisement pitifully appeals for financial help for a church at Olney, which, for a year past, has been held in "a wretched laundry." We have not sent our offering. The Christian superstition was born in a stable. It might as well die in "a wretched laundry."

In a leading article in the *Universe* the Pope is playfully called "The Fisherman of the Universe." Quite so! We presume he angles for flat-fish.

Booksellers are sometimes asked for curious books, and a friend of ours was staggered, a few days since, by a German gentleman asking for "Mrs. Crowe's '*Backside' of Nature*." Of course, the inquirer meant "nightside"; but his limited knowledge of English had this humorous result.

Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* has been used as a text-book in the Universities for about a century. And yet parsons have the audacity to call theology a science!

A Roman Catholic cathedral was recently opened in Sydney, Australia. The Governor (Earl Beauchamp), the Lord Justice, etc., were present. The Romish Archbishop had not the courage to declare in the presence of the audience what the papers next day reported him to have said. The reporters, says the *Rock*, were supplied with printed copies of the sermon before it was delivered; they were requested to print it verbatim. But the wily Archbishop (acting on the Jesuit principle of the means being subordinate to the end) suppressed, in the preached sermon, a number of passages which he thought would be unacceptable to some of his distinguished hearers, as, for instance, "The leaders and founders of Protestantism—Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli—were notorious for their vices.....Protestantism has desecrated the home, polluted the nuptial bed, lowered the dignity of womankind, devastated the school, and stopped the progress of science." The last accusation, we *must* say, comes with especial grace from a representative of the persecuting Church of Rome.

Mr. John Lobb, formerly the proprietor of the *Christian Age*, is one of the rejected candidates for the London School Board. An address that was issued to the electors on his behalf is a gem of unconscious humor. It stated: "John Lobb's pamphlets are notorious. He was for three years a member of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, and has devoted his pamphleteering genius to dementia, imbecility, and idiocy in all its forms."

The Australian parson mentioned last week who objected to dancing as ungodly, but encouraged kiss-in-the-ring and hunt-the-slipper, has been eclipsed. An Adelaide suburban clergyman has lately excised a corset advertisement from a fancy fair program on the ground that it would affect injuriously the morals of the young men of his congregation. Those morals must be rather shaky to be so easily upset.—*Topical Times.*

The Evangelical *News* mentions, as if it were an astounding fact which should raise the hair of its Christian readers, that the "yearly outlay of the public on single London papers, not including advertisement payments, far exceeds the entire income of the Church Missionary Society for evangelising the world!" Very likely. English people want their newspapers; the heathen do not want the Gospel; and the public outlay is regulated accordingly.

Christians seem to love one another at Whiting Bay, Arran. Their love is so consuming that they are almost prepared to kill each other, as in the "good old times." There is an Anti-Unionist Church party in the Bay, and last week they attempted to take possession of the local Free Church. The doors of the building, however, had been locked by the church officer, who, with his assistant, remained inside. The demonstrators climbed on to the roof of the church hall, and attempted to gain admission by the fanlight. Their entry was opposed by the two officials, whereupon, it is stated, a revolver was produced by one of the besiegers and levelled at the church official, who, considering discretion the better part of valor, hastily retired. The Anti-Unionists then entered through the window, and took possession of the building. Many of them, it is stated, sustained severe cuts through broken glass.

Unseemly disturbances between the United Presbyterian and the Free Church of Scotland have also taken place in other parts of the Highland district, particularly Ross and Sutherlandshire. At Evanton two reverend gentlemen, who had arrived to explain the doctrines of the Union, were pelted with eggs, stones, and other missiles, and with difficulty escaped into a room, the windows of which were smashed.

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What on earth is the use of Archbishop Walsh, of Dublin, raving at stage-plays? The performances in the cathedrals of his own Roman Catholic Church are all stage-managed, and designed to create impressions by pretty much the same adventitious aids adopted by the theatres he denounces. Besides, he has not made himself acquainted with the full bearings of the subject. He declares that plays are represented at the Dublin theatres which would not be tolerated in London. That is nonsense. The plays presented in the principal Dublin theatres are those which have achieved success in London, and are submitted in the course of the ordinary touring system.

The Manchester *Umpire* chaffs the Archbishop in a very amusing fashion. It says that *the* profession have insisted on returning the compliment of advertisement accorded by Dr. Walsh, and it publishes the following imaginative report: "Mr. Arthur Roberts yesterday laid the foundation-stone of the new Band of Hope Hall in Teetotal-lane. The gifted comedian was misunderstood to say that he did not recommend intolerant clerical addresses as a cure for narrow-mindedness, wooden legs, or sore heads. In fact, he thought that the more the public denied itself indulgence in such vicious pleasures—of which he spoke from hearsay only—the better it would be able to face a hard and censorious world. Mr. Roberts, however, proceeded to say that, even as there were no belles of the ballet without diamond rings, so there were no clerical bad-lots without some better. He had, therefore, much pleasure in recommending his audience to regularly attend the weekly addresses given by the Rev. Jeremiah Backbight, curate of Little Cursington. Mr. Backbight could say things that would raise the hair on the head of Kruger's statue, and his denunciations of the stage and actors were enough to make Ananias and Sapphira rise and protest. Those who listened could always pass away a pleasant hour wondering what Mr. Backbight meant, and whether he had any more idea than the Man-in-the-Moon of what he was talking about. 'There is a plate collection,' concluded Mr. Roberts, 'so nobody with ordinary skill at legerdemain need come empty away.'"

The Rev. Price Hughes makes another appeal on behalf of the Million Guineas Wesleyan Fund. He will not be satisfied until the whole of that amount is "laid at the blessed feet which, for us men and our salvation, toiled to Gethsemane and bled on Golgotha." This sanctimonious cant about the "blessed feet" is all very well to rope the money in with. The money may be laid, metaphorically, at the "blessed feet," but it will pretty soon afterwards find its way into the "blessed" pockets of Wesleyan ministers and other "professionals" of the sect, and why doesn't the Rev. Price Hughes have the manliness to say so?

The Folkestone Police-court missionary has sustained a severe shock. He went peering into some mutoscopes, and found that the pictures were "so indecent that he would rather have lost five guineas than have seen them." He recovered sufficiently to give evidence at the Police-court, and the magistrates ordered certain of the photos to be destroyed. Notice of appeal was given. Quite proudly this "Peeping Tom" announced that he had never been to a theatre in his life. We should have more faith in his sensitive, delicate purity if it weren't for the fact that, in common with other men of God, he carries all day long under his arm a book containing an abundance of undisguised obscenity and filth.

An American Methodist minister, named Brotherton, with a co-swindler named Kemp Van Ee, has paid a visit to the Old Country with very profitable results. They started some fraudulent syndicates and companies in Bishopsgate-street, E.C., and, having "lifted" the very respectable sum of £55,000, have bolted.

A young man has been committed for trial at Southwark for the theft of a bicycle. He had squandered £2,000 in gambling, and had been fined £50 for keeping a gaming house at Reigate. His father had intended him for the Church. With a little circumspection, he might have had his fling and been admitted to holy orders, after all.

The failure of Continental Catholicism was the subject of more than one lamentation at the recent Catholic Congress at Bourges. One of the speakers said: "I traverse France from Calais to Marseilles, as I do Italy, which in all respects it resembles, as also I do other European countries, and what do I see? Churches almost empty, churches where there is only a handful of people kneeling before the Holy Sacrament. I read the newspapers, and they teach me that, if things continue in this train, we are, humanly speaking, vanquished." The Abbe Pastorell, in a sermon to the Congress, said: "Men are drawing away from Christianity. Amongst the masses it is indifference. With great numbers of them the whole life contains room for not more than three or four religious observances. In the middle and upper classes the men also, with some miserable exceptions, are escaping us."

We have some delightful remnants of superstition, worthy of mediæval ages, still lingering in our midst. Here is Mr. Coupland Bowie relating, in the *Christian Life*, a conversation he had at the London School Board with Mr. Athelstan Riley. Says Mr. Bowie: "I remember on one occasion, when Mr. Riley was particularly severe on Unitarianism as a pernicious and soul-destroying system of belief, I inquired whether he really in his heart believed that I would be consigned to hell and the Devil for rejecting the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity. He answered that he was not prepared to say what would happen to me; he only knew that, if *he* rejected those great doctrines, *he* would perish everlastingly."

Professor Adeney continues, in the *Christian World*, his review of the century's progress in religious life and thought. He says it is plain that the rabbinical notion of the verbal inerrancy of Scriptures "has no longer any ground to stand upon." It is growingly felt "that the inspiration of the writers was limited to their mission as teachers of religion, and, further, that *even there* it did not secure them fulness of knowledge, or we could have had no progress in revelation." After this, what certainty is there about any portion of Holy Writ?

He says: "Some people still find a serious difficulty in regard to our Lord's references to the Old Testament. Still, in this matter, wiser views than once were held are gradually coming to the front. Nothing could be more disastrous than to tie down the authority of Jesus Christ to certain literary judgments. Earlier in the century the appeal was made with the utmost confidence, apparently without the faintest perception of the mischievous effects that would follow the inevitable reversal of the argument." Of course, the appeal was made; and naturally so, too. Apparently it is the "consequences" that now suggest its discouragement. To talk of "literary judgments" is to talk nonsense. The references of Christ to certain Old Testament incidents were obviously made as references to matters of fact, and were so received. If he knew they were fable and fiction, he must have deliberately lent himself to the perpetuation of gross delusion, which has existed down to the present time.

The *Church Gazette* still lives, and continues to administer nasty knocks at dull and indolent clerics. In its latest issue it has a leader which concludes as follows: "The laity want the clergy to be more sensible and practical, and to live as men aware of the needs of their own time. We do not say that the laity expect it—they have ceased to do so, from long and disappointing experience; but that is what they demand if the Church is to be to them anything more than a name."

The Rev. Dr. Horton, in a recent address, said he took it for granted that the pulpit is losing hold of the men of the country (he was speaking of England, and of London especially; but it might apply to Scotland too), and he held that the decay of pulpit influence is due to its own vices. The *British Weekly*, commenting on this address, says it is afraid that the power of the press is increasing, and that the power of the pulpit is not keeping pace with it.

We know now what has brought so much disaster on the Boers. The Bishop of Rochester has found it out. He says it is because they are a non-missionary nation. The Boers have steadily disowned the duty of mission work; consequently they have been smashed to pieces, and that is the fate awaiting all nations who neglect missionary labor.

Another volume of Dr. Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible* has been issued. Dr. Bernard contributes an articles on "Miracles." The *Church Times* considers it a valuable contribution, except in regard to Dr. Bernard's treatment of the miracles of the Old Testament. As an example of what it objects to, the *Church Times* quotes the following passage (p. 393): "While we distinctly recognise the miraculous nature of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, and are not slow to accept the allegation that *miracles* may have accompanied their progress, we cannot think that the evidence for several recorded miracles, such as Elisha making the axe-head to swim (2 Kings vi. 5), the speaking of Balaam's ass (Numbers xxii. 28), and the staying of the sun and moon at Gibeon (Joshua x. 12), is at all sufficient to compel implicit credence in their literal truth."

The *North British Mail* relates the following story of two Free Church office-bearers who, a few days ago, foregathered and fell into a very heated discussion. "I am surprised at you, man!' exclaimed one of them; "your views are diametrically opposed to those of Bunyan and Spurgeon." "Bunyan and Spurgeon!" repeated the other with withering sarcasm, and then continued: "I don't care a pin-point for the views and opeenions o' aal the Bunyans and Spurgeons in Scotland!"

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 9, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "Christian Charity in China."

December 16, 23, 30, Athenæum Hall.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—December 9, Battersea Baths.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

OWING to the pressure of other matter upon our space, the second part of Mr. W. Heaford's article on "Freethought in Germany" stands over till next week.

G. D. B.—Thanks for the paper. We are always very glad to see such correspondence in local journals.

E. W. S.—Pleased to hear that your wife has accepted Secularism and actually means to contribute to the new year's Shilling Week. Some Freethinkers talk about converting the world, and never make a beginning in their own homes. Your answer to your orthodox querist shows that you have got hold of the subject by the right handle.

R. PARKER.—Order executed. Please send in future direct to the Freethought Publishing Company, not to Mr. Foote.

W. P. BALL.—Always glad to receive your cuttings.

H. R. WRIGHT.—Thanks. See paragraph.

DOCODA.—You fail as yet in the *technique* of versification. This does not come by intuition, but by study and practice.

J. CHAPMAN.—We know absolutely nothing of the infidel-slayer named Linton who is advertised to settle Freethought at Tunbridge Wells. He is probably a nobody "on the make," who will find his own level if you let him alone. We cannot undertake to send down someone to oppose him. Thanks, all the same, for your letter.

J. PARTRIDGE.—See paragraph. We wish the Birmingham Branch all success now and henceforth.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for the cuttings, though they arrive too late for use in this week's *Freethinker*. We were already overset for the present issue.

H. S. SHACKELTON.—We have no knowledge whatever of Mr. Holyoake's views on Swedenborgianism.

J. BARRY.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

M. ROGERS.—It shall be dealt with in our next, and returned to you as desired.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Alfred Marsh, £1; T. H. Seymour, £1.

H. PERCY WARD.—Go on, and fight on, and you will gain a better reward than any thanks of ours—highly as you value them.

R. R.—Too full of copy this week. In our next.

PORPHYRIUS.—Back numbers sent you as requested. You are on the right track.

A. CLARK.—The matter shall have attention, with a view to action if possible.

D. FRANKEL.—Looking over your letter again, we must say it is rather off the lines of Mr. Wright's communication.

S. HOLMAN.—Instead of inserting an inadequate report of Mr. Treharne-Jones's lecture, we should prefer to insert something from his own pen. A summary of a lecture is to the lecture itself, too often, what the skeleton is to a human being. See Mr. Watts's article this week for the other matter.

ALFRED MARSH sends us £1 towards Mr. H. Percy Ward's expenses in the School Board contest at Birmingham.

JOHN SCOTT.—We will think the matter over and let you know. Thanks.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Torch of Reason—Hull Daily Mail—Blue Grass Blade—Literary Guide—Wigan Observer—Nottingham Guardian—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Truthseeker (New York)—Frankfurter Zeitung—Two Worlds—Journal of International Psychical Institute—The Gray Goose—Truth (Christchurch)—Newcastle Evening Leader—Kensington News.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE returns to the Athenæum Hall this evening (Dec. 9), when he will deliver a special lecture on "Christian Charity in China." Freethinkers are earnestly invited to bring their orthodox friends to this lecture, and to make it as widely known as possible amongst the general public. Mr. Foote has collected a lot of startling information as to the methods of the co-operative Christian army in the Celestial Empire, and he will deal with the subject candidly and fearlessly.

Peace continues to reign at the Aldgate Public Baths on Sunday, thanks to the gentlemen in blue who scare away the local Hooligans. Mr. Foote was the lecturer last Sunday evening, and was accorded an enthusiastic reception by a really fine audience, nearly all the seating accommodation for six hundred people being occupied. Mr. Thurlow, who acted as chairman, had a very easy task, for there was not the slightest semblance of disorder. The whole meeting was attentive and appreciative to the highest degree. All the lecturer's points were readily caught up, and from beginning to end there was a running fire of laughter and applause, which terminated in a remarkably fervent outburst as he resumed his seat. Some good-tempered opposition was offered by a gentlemanly Christian Evidence speaker, and the meeting closed with more cheers for the lecturer's equally good-tempered reply.

Mr. W. Heaford lectures at the Aldgate Public Baths this evening (December 9). This is the last meeting of the present series, and we hope the East End "saints" will do their utmost to secure Mr. Heaford an audience worthy of his talents and his long service to the Freethought cause.

The third of the special course of propagandist lectures at Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Islington, was delivered on Monday evening by Mr. Foote. In spite of the wet weather there was a much improved attendance, which was felt in the religious part of the proceedings—the collection. On the whole the meeting was very clearly in sympathy with the lecturer. Mr. Cattell, who presided, threw out a strong invitation for questions and discussions, but only a few questions were asked, and no opposition was offered, although one auditor had been industriously taking notes. The last lecture of this course will be delivered by Mr. Moss next Monday evening (Dec. 10), his subject being "Christianity and Evolution." We trust he will have a good audience.

Mr. Foote lectured at the Paddington Public Baths on Tuesday evening; Mr. Edwards, of the West London Branch, occupying the chair. The lecture was followed with close attention and sympathy, and half-an-hour's discussion took place afterwards. The collection was an exceptionally good one. It is to be hoped that this large well-situated hall will be available for further meetings.

Mr. Cohen had the pioneer task of opening the Battersea course of Sunday evening lectures at the Public Baths. There was not a large meeting last Sunday, nor was it to be expected. No doubt there will be an improvement as the course proceeds. The hall is a larger one than we thought. Mr. Cohen advises us that it will hold 800, and has seats for 550. We hope the local "saints" will do their level best to fill it. We hear that they complain of insufficient advertising, but they do not offer any definite suggestions. There are plenty of handbills for distribution, and we suggest that they should distribute them. The lecturer this evening (Dec. 9) is Mr. Charles Watts.

Another hall has been engaged in South London for a course of week-night lectures. It is the Metropolitan Temperance Hall in the Blackfriars-road. The evenings are Mondays, December 10 and 17, and January 7 and 14. Mr. Foote will take one evening, and Messrs. Watts and Cohen the others. We hope the South London friends will see to the circulation of the handbills, which can be obtained at 1 Stationers' Hall Court from Miss Vance.

It is terribly difficult to obtain halls for Freethought lectures on Sunday evenings in London. We all knew it would not be easy, but no one thought it would be so hard. With a view to occupying the lecturers engaged under the Concentration Scheme in London, at least up to the end of the present year, the Camberwell Secular Hall has been engaged for three Sunday evenings, December 16, 23, and 30. Messrs. Watts and Cohen will be the lecturers, and special handbills are being issued for distribution in South London.

The Annual General Meeting of the Secular Society, Limited, was held at the Manchester Hotel on Friday evening, November 30. Mr. G. W. Foote, as chairman, read the Board of Directors' report and presented the balance-sheet, both of which were adopted. The three retiring Directors—Messrs. Foote, Hartmann, and Warren—were re-elected, and Messrs. Bater and Woods were elected in

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addition, to bring the Board up to the maximum of twelve members. Mr. Hartmann, who is the N.S.S. treasurer, in speaking on the report said the meeting ought not to pass without an expression of the great debt of gratitude that was owing to the Chairman for devising, establishing, and watching over the interests of the Society, which he (Mr. Hartmann) regarded as the most important piece of constructive work ever done for the Secular movement. Copies of the report and balance-sheet can be obtained by Freethinkers who are non-members of the Society by applying to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C.

The Secular Society, Limited, subscribed two guineas towards the expenses of each of four "Secular Education" candidates in the recent London School Board elections. Unfortunately not one of them succeeded in gaining a seat, although the fight they made is bound to produce good results in future contests. Mr. F. G. Jones polled 10,718 votes in Chelsea, where the highest successful candidate polled 14,269 votes, and the lowest 12,008. A little more effort should, therefore, carry in the "Secular Education" candidate at the next election. Mr. W. J. Barwick did rather badly in Finsbury, his poll amounting to 4,617, which is less than Mr. Watts polled six years ago, although a Social Democratic candidate was also in the field with "Secular Education" in his program. Mr. Barwick's poll represented nothing like half the strength of the parties he stood for. We believe this is owing to the fact that, while he is sound enough on the point of "Secular Education," he is by no means as ardent about it as he is about other points on which he appealed to the electors. Perhaps he will see by the next election what is most likely to be the winning point of his program. Mr. H. Quelch polled only 4,159 votes in East Lambeth, but Mr. G. Hewitt did very much better in the Tower Hamlets, polling 10,350 votes. Mr. Hewitt, we may observe, made a stronger point of "Secular Education," and was well supported by prominent friends of that policy.

Mrs. Bridges Adams secured second place at Greenwich with 13,497 votes. The newspapers represented her as a Progressive and Labor candidate. But she was not a Progressive in the official sense of the word. She bravely refused to accept the Progressive "Bible-Reading" ticket, and insisted on retaining "Secular Education" in her program. Her brilliant success at the poll should be a lesson and an inspiration to other candidates at the next elections.

Official organs of the so-called Progressive party—for instance, the *Daily News*—carefully concealed the part played by "Secular Education" in the London School Board elections. But what is the use of this ostrich policy, when it is pretty clear that, with reasonable resources and good organisation, the "Secular Education" party would probably be able to win at least half-a-dozen seats? The matter would *have* to be mentioned then.

The Birmingham Branch of the N.S.S. has promptly applied for the use of the Board schools on the same terms as they are granted to other bodies of ratepayers, and the application has been referred to the Sites and Building Committee. An amendment, declaring that the Board saw no reason to depart from its previous decision, was lost; and the Branch is not without hope of receiving a favorable reply.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectured last Sunday morning to an excellent audience at the North Camberwell Radical Club on "Byron and Shelley." This evening (Dec. 9) he lectures at New Brompton on "Shakespeare." No doubt he will have a good meeting.

Mr. E. Treharne-Jones, late curate of Treherbert, is lecturing this morning and evening (Dec. 9) in the Empire Theatre, Pontypridd, on "Christian Morality" and "Christianity a Myth." This gentleman, who has just seceded from the Church of England and from Christianity too, has favored us with a personal letter, which we are too busy to answer until we have got this week's *Freethinker* off our hands. Meanwhile we wish him all success in his new propaganda.

Pressure upon our space continues this week, and we are, therefore, again obliged to postpone the insertion of Mr. Foote's lengthy statement, etc., *re* the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. As the statement is accompanied by some observations and an appeal, it is perhaps as well that the matter should be fresh in the readers' hands (and minds) during the Christmas holidays, when Freethinkers may all have a little leisure to reflect on their duties towards their own movement.

The Freethought Publishing Company, Limited.

Notice is hereby given that the Register Books of the above company are closed (under section 33 of the Companies' Act) from December 10 to December 24 for the purpose of annual audit, etc

E. M. Vance, *Secretary.*

Robert Burns.

"He is the supreme representative man of his nation in literature. Scott was a good archer, but he never bent so mighty a bow nor sped a shaft so true to the centre."—James Thomson.

De Quincey, in a caustic mood, observed that many a writer is, by the sycophancy of literature, reputed to be read whom no one cares about. This is, assuredly, not the case with Robert Burns. He has been dead over a hundred years, and his fame is far wider and more secure than it was when he passed away. His life is now celebrated as an important historical event, and his poetry is regarded as a glorious contribution to the literature of the world. Admittedly Scotland's greatest poet, he has been subjected to an extreme amount of conscious adulation at the hands of his admiring, but indiscreet, countrymen. Had he been a lesser genius than he really is, this fulsome praise would have exposed him to the derision of all sober men.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, with biting sarcasm, remarked that it was a matter for surprise that puritanical Caledonia could take Burns to her straightlaced bosom without breaking her stays. For there was nothing of the puritan in Burns. On the contrary, he was a Freethinker, although Christian apologists, urged by theological jealousy, have striven desperately to disguise the unwelcome fact. They conceal his heresies, or they lament them, with customary pious hypocrisy, as part of his "wasted life."

Burns, like Paine and Voltaire, was a Deist. Of other religion, save what flowed from a mild Theism, he scarce showed a trace. In truth, one can scarcely call it a creed. It is mainly a name for a particular mood of sentimentalism, the expression of a state of indefinite aspiration. The Holy Willies of Orthodoxy have made the basest uses of this emotionalism, but Christians can hardly read Burns without unloosening some of the shackles of their gloomy faith. Hume's young freethinking contemporary did not merely express his dissent from Calvinism. He struck at the very core of the Christian superstition. He saw plainly that priests trade on fears of mankind. He sounded a true note when he scornfully said:—

> The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
> To haud the wretch in order.

How he satirised the *unco guid* and rigidly-righteous—

> Sae pious and sae holy,
> Y've nought to do but mark and tell
> Your neebor's fauts and folly.

And again:—

> Learn three-mile prayers, and half-mile graces,
> Wi' weel spread looves, an 'lang wry faces,
> Grunt up a solemn lengthened groan,
> And damn a' parties but your own;
> I'll warrant then ye'er nae deceiver,
> A steady, sturdy, staunch believer.

Burns knew the different value of conduct and creed:—

> Ye'll get the best o' moral works
> 'Mang black Gentoos and Pagan Turks,
> Or hunters wild on Ponotaxi
> Wha never heard of orthodoxy.

He never hesitated to attack the most sacred Christian beliefs:—

> D'yrymple mild, D'yrymple mild, tho' your
> heart's like a child,
> And your life like the new driven snaw,
> Yet that winna save ye, auld Satan must have ye
> For preaching that three's ane an' twa.

He even poked fun at the "Merciful Great God" of the Christians:—

> O Thou wha in the Heavens dost dwell,
> Wha, as it pleases best thysel',
> Sends ane to Heaven and ten to Hell,
> A' for Thy Glory,
> And no for ony guid or ill
> They've done afore thee!

Burns characteristically said his favorite hero was Milton's "Satan." He carried about with him a well-thumbed pocket edition of *Paradise Lost*, "in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity, unyielding independence, and noble defiance of hardship in that great personage, Satan."

In the vital part of his genius Burns is original. He is a pioneer, fresh and audacious. How his love of freedom bursts out in the chorus of his "Jolly Beggars":—

> A fig for those by law protected! . . . .
> Liberty's a glorious feast!

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Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

In speaking of Burns's poems one must allude to the "Cotter's Saturday Night." Orthodox bigots, wishing to gloss over Burns's Freethought, have tortured this poem into a confession that Burns pined to death for lack of the Christian Soothing Syrup. The "Saturday Night" is obviously less a religious poem than the testimony of a dutiful son dwelling on the remembrance of an affectionate parent of an emotional nature, recalling the old home of childhood. It finally merges into Burns's favorite themes, patriotism, independence, and valor, not Christian virtues by any means. Burns was the kind of poet who is, like Mrs. Browning's Euripides, pre-eminently "the human." He could say, with Heinrich Heine, "the Voltaire of Germany":—

> "Red life boils in my veins. Every woman is to me the gift of a world. I hear a thousand nightingales. I could eat all the elephants of Hindostan and pick my teeth with the spire of Strasburg Cathedral. Life is the greatest of blessings."

And, indeed, while it is quite true that those who have ceased to know love have ceased to know life, there comes an inevitable stage in which it is no longer ours

To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair.

And with it comes the time when the keener raptures have to be known vicariously in the pages of Burns, Heine, or De Musset.

This "royal peasant" sang of love and liberty with a fiery sincerity which a reader must be without heart or brain to resist. His songs are instinct with individuality. They are, as it were, clothed with his voice; they flash with the lightnings of his glance; they glow with his inspiration. Without that charge of personal energy, they were so much empty verbiage, and no more. And then, while the artist may not be elegant, refined, nor consummate, the man is nothing if not delightful in influence and a veritable enchanter in effect. Every Freethinker will say of him what Burns himself said in his epitaph on his friend:—

With such as he, where'er he be,
May I be saved or damned.

MIMNERMUS.

The Land of Confucius.—II.

(Continued from page 765.)

IN 1834 the charter of the East India Company, which had a sort of smuggling trade with China, expired, and, although it was renewed for a period of twenty years, it was practically nullified by the British Parliament, which gave to any of its subjects the equal right to trade in the privileged posts of China. This resulted in the immediate and vast increase of the importation of opium from the British-Indian possessions. This became so great, the people took to it so kindly, that the use of opium soon became almost universal among the Chinese people. Some of the officials, noting its influence, noting, too, that the importation of the drug was increasing, made a stubborn protest against it. Winning to their side some of the English philanthropists, the opium importation was for a time forbidden. These events occurred in the year 1839, and, by the united action of the English and Chinese commissioners, all the opium then in store in Canton, or lying in the holds of vessels in the harbor, was gathered upon the shore, placed in huge trenches, mixed with unslacked lime, and the waters of the sea conducted into the ditches. As the result of this controversy, and the destruction of opium, there were bitter and violent protests on the part of the English merchants; and then followed the war of 1839, known as the opium war. That controversy developed the fact that there were directly opposite opinions, both among the Chinese and among the English, as to whether the use of opium was deleterious or not, and it was finally decided that it was not especially hurtful, and that its harm lay in the abuse of it, and not in the use of it. Subsequently the importation of opium was officially sanctioned by the Emperor's Government, and continues until this day. But, as a result of this war, England compelled a sort of recognition in the Flowery Kingdom. So far was the concession made that she was permitted to have a commissioner of commerce, or superintendent of trade, resident in that country, and, instead of the closing of the ports, eight others, in addition to Canton, were opened to English commerce.

The matter that now lay in dispute was how, or whether at all, the English representative could have an audience with the Emperor of China. Hitherto the negotiations had been carried on between the English representative and the Emperor's representative. No foreigner had ever seen the face of the "son of heaven." The Chinese etiquette and tradition resented an audience of any foreign representative with their Emperor, because that would imply a sense of equality—an admission that the Chinese Emperor was not superior to all other potentates on earth. This question was to the front for more than thirty years, and was never finally settled until the time of the disturbance between France and China in the year 1870. In that year certain religious fanatics murdered three of the French Catholic missionaries and twenty-two of the native converts. In seeking reparation for that outrage, France insisted, as one of the conditions, that an audience should be granted to her representative. This was finally, with great reluctance, conceded, and in 1870 the representative of the French Government had an audience with the "son of heaven"; but it was afterwards discovered that this audience was held in the hall of "tributary nations." Thus had the Chinese saved, at least, a little of the claim of superiority by compelling this representative to meet in the hall dedicated solely to communications with vassal or tributary States. As it was simply a matter of etiquette, and as the essential demands of the development of commerce could be secured without it, it was not resisted by any foreign power until twenty years subsequent to that time. The right of audience has only been granted to foreign representatives within the last decade, and even yet there is a matter of conduct in dispute, the representatives refusing to perform the ceremony of prostration of the body to the earth in token of the superiority of the Celestial Emperor.

The religion of this people has been, whenever uninvaded, whenever unimpeded, whenever unassailed, sufficient and adequate for the wants of their people. According to tradition, St. Thomas the Apostle once visited China, and so, if the tradition be accepted as true, Christianity, or its representative, was there at the very beginning of the Christian era. It is said that a Nestorian preacher visited China and proclaimed his gospel as early as the year 636; it is certain that Roman Catholic missionaries invaded that country in the beginning of the thirteenth century; the modern missionary movement to China dates from the beginning of the present century. The greatest and most destructive internal strifes the Chinese people have ever suffered have been those which arose from religious differences. At a very early date the Mohammedans sent missionaries, and made a large number of converts, especially in the southern part of the empire. About 1870 began an eighteen-years' war, which was simply a strife for supremacy between the invading Mohammedans, with their new religious ideas, and the Chinese, with their ancient system.

Left alone and undisturbed, I have said that the religion of the Chinese is sufficient for Chinese needs. This recalls the history of that great sage whose name is still the pride and whose renown is the imperishable glory of the Celestial kingdom—Confucius. Born in the year 551 B.C., and living to the age of seventy-two, he left his imprint so indelibly upon that strange multitude of beings that it remains ineffaced and ineffaceable. Devoted to study, taken into the public service, and winning in that capacity distinction and prominence, his mother having died, he at the age of twenty-four resigned his office, and went into a period of seclusion and mourning for three years. During this time he gave himself up to meditation and reflection, and ever after, except for the brief period when he was prime minister of the empire, he devoted his time to the teaching of philosophical and moral truths, and to the promulgation of these ideas throughout the empire. In the system which he formulated he rejected all divine revelation; he said that the sufficient and secure basis for all real advancement in morals was man's knowledge of himself. He endeavored to adapt his maxims to the needs and aptitudes of men; he appeared to see within

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the strange mystery of human life sufficient potency for its final triumph and completeness. Being asked one day to give, in a single sentence, a rule sufficient for the conduct of human life, he replied in these words: "Do not unto others what you would not have them do to you." Thus the Golden Rule, at least in its negative form, antedates the birth of the Christian era by five centuries and a-half, and flowered first on the lips of a pagan philosopher.

The vitality of this ancient people may be seen in the fact that they have endured. Modern students have set apart a period for the life of nations, and have said that, judging by history, five centuries is about the allotted time of any nation upon the earth; but this people has endured for many times five centuries. The causes and inherent sources of the vitality of that people are simply a matter of conjecture. Let me suggest two. One is that the people are free from modern enthusiasm and consuming passion for the accumulation of material wealth. A nation or a man may grow enormously wealthy, but it cannot be said that the forces of continuity or long life are in any great sense furnished or nourished by this accumulation of wealth. The rivalries and strifes, the revolutions and broils, the internal convulsions that have shaken that ancient people more than once, have been rivalries that existed between the pretentious princes and petty governors. They have not originated with the people. They find the sufficient satisfaction of the life in the simpler pursuits, and are free from the fever and stress and strain, the wild, mad rush that characterises almost every other nation upon the globe. Another reason for that great vitality may be found in the fact that the people, as a rule, are not meat eaters. I am not here to argue for or against the doctrine of vegetarianism, but we cannot refuse a just consideration of facts. Here are a people, the most numerous on the globe and the most ancient, who in a large measure exist without the use of meats. They do eat poultry, and they are fond of pork; in the northern provinces mutton is a common article of food, but rice, herbs, vegetables, and fruit have constituted for centuries the chief diet of the Chinese. Moreover, the people are temperate. Brandy and beer are unknown, and wine rarely seen. They make an intoxicating liquor from rice, but the person who discovered the way to make it was banished from the empire. I do not know how much weight is to be placed upon these things; but here is the astounding fact—a people with sufficient vitality to defy the ravages of time, and to rise with preposterous strength from the devastations of flood, famine, pestilence, and war. It is said that during one famine at least thirty millions of people died. A famine in one district is greatly aggravated because of the almost impossibility of other provinces sending succor or aid. The transportation of goods throughout much of the internal region of China is carried on upon men's backs, in wheelbarrows, and upon mules, ponies, and donkeys. With its immense resources of agriculture and mining, with its invitations to commerce that are already exciting the avarice and cupidity of the globe, it has yet no adequate means of communication between its own provinces in time of need. To these things as much as to any other must be ascribed the reason for that enormous vitality. Let me add one more—the fact that the people have no divine revelation and no thought of dependence upon any power not themselves. It cannot be denied that the wars of devastation, the revolutions that have changed the history and the destinies of nations, have been frequently brought on by the zeal of religionists. This simple people, without a thought of divine aid or of a divine revealer, worshipping Confucius not as a god, but as a man, extolling the human, loving nature, living so far as possible in harmony with its laws, undisturbed by the superstitions and sanctities that are guised and garbed as religion, has developed the power to mock at time and defy the changes and mutations of history.

(DR) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be continued.)

Truth can never be confirmed enough, Though doubt did ever sleep.—*Shakespeare.*

Echoes from Olympus.

III.—CONCERNING JUVENILE CELESTIALS.

"So," said Master Tommy, in his night-shirt and with a pair of wings, "we are in the 'home for little children above the bright blue sky.' That was one of our Sunday-school hymns, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said little Alice, similarly arrayed; "this is the place they told us about, but I don't like it. Do you?"

"Well," replied Tommy, striding his legs apart and feeling in vain for his trousers pockets, "I don't think I do. Anyhow, I wish I had come up here a *man*. Men can do so much more than boys. They have all the fun, and we have to sit still and listen and watch, and sometimes they are very nasty with us."

"But we shall grow, Tommy, shan't we?"

"I hope so, else I'd sooner have stopped down at home and had ever so many complaints. I haven't been here long enough to find out whether we *do* really grow in heaven, but it will be an awful shame if we don't."

"What did you die of, Tommy?"

"I don't know 'xactly, but it was some long thing the doctor spoke of. I couldn't tell what it was. I saw angels just at the last, but they weren't like any of these up here."

"Were the ones you saw nice?"

"Oh, heaps."

"Perhaps what you saw were those in the picture-books at the Sunday-school."

"That was it. These up here are nothing like 'em. Not a bit. But I say, Alice, what did you die of?"

"Oh, quite a s'perior kind of complaint mine was. The doctor said it was a most 'strordinary case. He had never seen anything like it before. I'm glad I didn't die of anything low and vulgar. Mamma would have been *so* annoyed. I had three doctors altogether. How many did you have?"

"Well—I think it was only one, but then pa paid him ten guineas a visit."

"I wonder whether we had nice funerals."

"Ah, that we don't know—do we? I know pa would see that I was buried proper."

"Did you feel cold in the ground, Tommy?"

"Not a bit. Didn't know nothing about it."

"I used always to think that people, when they're buried, *must* feel cold, 'specially when there was snow."

"Oh, no. That's what girls think; but *I* didn't mind if it was, because I felt so hot in bed. But I say, it isn't anything like the picture-books up here, is it? It's nothing but Sunday-school and Sunday-school for ever and ever. Amen. I wish I'd never been christened, and then I shouldn't have come."

"Oh, Tommy, how wicked—and you an angel, too. If you hadn't been christened, you would have gone down to the Naughty Man, and that would have been worse."

"I don't care; I had 'nuff of Sunday-school before. But I say, Alice, I'm off. I'm going to see if I can't find somebody to have a game with. I don't see any boys that I know. Johnny, that died of scarlet fever next door, ought to be here, but I can't see him anywhere. There are so many. 'Wever, I'm off."

"And I," said Alice disconsolately, "shall have to play with Lilly and Dolly, and I don't like them a bit. They think so much of themselves because they have been here before me, and know all about it. I daresay I could have died sooner if I had liked. But oh, it is so lonely!"

Tommy gone, Alice sat down in her loneliness in these great wide heavens, and cried. Then there came along an elderly angel, who was none other than the Apostle Paul. You could see he was venerable, because his wings had begun to moult.

"Why, my little maiden," he exclaimed, "in tears—though in heaven. Astonishing! This is the abode of eternal bliss. Earthly grief has no counterpart or entrance here. All trouble and pain are banished from these heavenly realms, where felicity alone eternally reigns."

"I know, sir," Alice replied, "but I want my dear mamma and my brothers and sisters."

"Oh, they will come in due time—all in due time."

"Are you *sure* they will?" Alice eagerly inquired, and fixed her soft blue eyes intently upon him.

The Apostle looked askance. Then he said hesitatingly: "Well—no doubt they will. They are probably a godly family, who attend church regularly, take the blessed Sacrament, keep the Sabbath day holy, and subscribe to the Church funds. Meanwhile, how thankful you should be that you were duly baptised; that you were taught to say your prayers regularly morning and evening; that you went to a Sunday-school and had to learn so many verses of Holy Writ. How thankful you ought to be that you were not allowed to romp and play like the children of irreligious parents; that you were frequently chastised, and kept under strict religious discipline till you had ceased to exhibit any of the joy and gaiety and buoyancy and brightness of ordinary childhood; that your dear maiden aunt (who reads my Epistles daily) gave you all those beautiful and improving tracts, and examined you afterwards as to whether you had read and understood them, and severely reprimanded you if you failed.

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How thankful you must be to the dear, kind minister of your church who set you the Catechism to learn—pages of it, and instructed you in the fundamental principles of the Christian religion."

"I know, sir," said Alice; "but mamma was very kind to me, and made excuses for me when I couldn't learn my Catechism and other things with the long words that I couldn't tell the meaning of even when it was explained. And, oh, I want to see my mamma. It isn't, and can't be, bliss when we are so far apart. I won't believe it—no, not if it was said over and over again a thousand times."

"Now think," continued the Apostle, ignoring this little outburst; "what would have happened to you if you had died unbaptized? You would never have been here. *Where* would you have been? Why, in eternal misery, with the myriads of unhappy infants who might well curse the day they were born. How much you have to be grateful for."

"I know, sir; but I *do* want my mamma."

"Who's your family doctor?"

"Dr. Bismuth, sir."

"Then likely enough you'll see her when next she falls ill. Now dry your eyes, and come along with me, and I will show you the cherubims and seraphims. They are such funny-looking creatures. Also some little cherubs—infant angels, such as you have seen in your Sunday-school picture books. They are such gay, chubby little chicks—just like Cupids. They fly about without any clothes, and never catch cold. All the lady angels who were married on earth simply doat upon them. They remind them of their own earthly little ones. Some angels, who were elderly maiden ladies on earth, have wanted to make them little shirts and knickers; but the Lord wouldn't have it. The Lord is very fond of little children. He said: 'Let the children come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

"Then," asked Alice, "why has he let all those children who were not baptized go down to the other place?"

"Ahem! That is a mystery, my dear, which it does not concern us to penetrate."

"What has become of all the children killed by Pharaoh at the time when Moses was born, and of those killed by Herod when Jesus was born? Are they up here or down below?"

"That I have no special information about. I really cannot tell. I am not omniscient. There is only One who is. Let us talk about something else. Do you like nice music? because we have a beautiful oratorio—*Holy, Holy, Holy.* It goes on day and night, everlastingly. The angels go in in batches, because there isn't accommodation for them all at once. St. John of Patmos is the conductor; it's his idea. St. Matthew is in the box office; he used to sit at the receipt of custom when on earth. I can pass you in without a ticket. They all know me."

"Oh, wouldn't Tommy like to go!" exclaimed Alice.

"Who is Tommy?"

"He is a little boy who lived near us in the Clapham-road, London."

"Anywhere near Spurgeon's Tabernacle?"

"Not far off."

"Then go and fetch him and bring him to me. Stay, let me give you my address—Gold and Ruby Throne, 6th Kingdom, N.E. Tell Tommy we have some funny beasts to show him. We must, at least, try to make you happy now you are here."

Alice flew away along the golden streets, past the palaces of saints, and the marble halls of the godly, and the pleasure grounds in which were lakes of molten gold. Quite unexpectedly, considering the vastness of that heavenly region, she had the good fortune to speedily encounter her young friend, who seemed to be flying about rather distractedly.

"What is the matter, Tommy?" she asked, perceiving a troubled look on his face.

"A lot the matter," he replied ruefully. "Who do you think I flew into when I left you?"

"I don't know, Tommy; who was it?"

"Why, old Biffkins, the superintendent of St. Mary's Sunday-school—you know him, the one we used to be under. I tried to fly away from him as hard as I could, but it was no use. The old beggar laid hold of me. 'Why, my young friend,' he says, 'are *you* here? Well, what a happy meeting, to be sure. And now you see what you have got to thank me for. You never would have been here if it hadn't been for me. And now we have met in these blessed realms of the glorified ones—you and me, Tommy, we will never part again—no, never. We'll continue our devotions together now to all eternity. Death can no longer separate us. Yes, Tommy, we will resume here in heaven all those happy times we had in St. Mary's Sunday-school on earth. I can be always with you now, Tommy, and we will raise up our voices together in praise of the Holy One for ever and ever.'"

"And what did you say, Tommy?"

"Oh, I put him off. I said 'Yes, sir, all right; but just now I am obliged to fly away to find somebody that I was looking for very special,' and then I got away. Oh lor, to think of having *him* at your elbow for ever and ever, world without end!"

Alice looked sympathetic, but said nothing.

"Let's do a guy!" said Tommy at length with great determination. "Let's hook it as far away from here as ever we can—thousands and thousands and thousands of miles away, so as he can never find us."

"Very well," said Alice. In another moment they had mounted high on their wings, and then they flew like lightning in a southerly direction—over palaces and temples and gardens and lakes and mountains, until at last they vanished from view in a purple cloud.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Correspondence.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The article on the School Board Election in last week's issue, by Mr. Cohen, has carried me back to the religious troubles which were experienced by me as a delicate, sensitive child. My parents are old-fashioned Baptists, and my first childish recollection is of Sunday-school, where I sat turning over the leaves of a Bible and wondering why God had made man, and then afterwards repented that he had done so; why, after being cruel enough to make hell, he could not have saved man from it without sacrificing his own Son; why, even if Christ had died nearly two thousand years ago, it could affect us now; and, in fact, many similar thoughts troubled my baby mind, until a teacher from behind, noticing my inattention, brought me to myself by raising a bump behind my ear with the edge of his Bible, and I heard the superintendent give out the hymn:—

There is a dreadful 'ell,
And heverlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire, and chains.

This sort of thing continued for some time; but at last, like all other good things, it came to an end, and from the Sunday-school I went to hear the parson preach a sermon which was not intended for little children; and so ended the Sabbath morning.

In the afternoon, by way of a nice change, the parson preached first, and the school came afterwards, concluding with that hymn so dear to the heart of every little child:—

Almighty God, thy piercing eye strikes through the shades of night,
And our most secret actions lie all open to thy sight.

The evening was spent at home, but play or recreation in any form was not allowed, and only books that were extra good must be read; and, to wind up the day, ill-tempered and miserable as we were by this time, Bibles were again fetched out, and then, after reading a chapter, came bed. But somehow, after the light was taken away, I lay thinking. Every time the clock ticked I was nearer, and millions of others were nearer, death—and then, what? Would father and mother, brothers and sisters, and all those I loved, escape that hell, or would one, even one of them, be condemned to that torment to which there was no end? And then I saw something, at the sight of which I struggled to scream in terror; but my tongue was unable to make a sound, for there, just above my head, was an eye, without a body—a large, cruel, terrible eye looking straight at me, the eye about which we, or rather they, had sung in Sunday-school; and I pulled the clothes over my head and sobbed, and trembled and prayed in that greatest of all agonies, the agony of innocent, helpless childhood, until, worn out in body and spirit, I fell asleep. I might give many similar instances of the misery I suffered as a child, if it were not for occupying too much of your time; but the effect of it all was that, as I grew up, the evils and cruelty of giving young children any religious training whatever became more and more apparent to me.

No Freethinker need send his children to Sunday-school, of course; but often, as I pass by the week-day schools in the town in which I live—schools upheld by public money—the poor little things are repeating that concoction of rot known as the Church Catechism—a condition of things which is an insult to a dissenter, but is absolutely intolerable to a Freethinker. And, therefore, I am pleased with the bold stand you are making in this respect (because, as you say, Nonconformity is equally as bad as the Church, if opportunity occurs), and I have long ago vowed that, if children are entrusted to my care, they shall never set foot in a place where religious instruction is given, and through which their childhood might be blighted and embittered and rendered utterly destitute of happiness, as was mine.

W. J. GILBERT.

WE regret to record the death of Mr. A. W. Marks, of Sheerness, which took place on Friday, November 30. The funeral was a Secular one; Mr. Barber, a friend of the deceased, reading a Secular Service at the graveside. Mr. Marks was a very sterling Freethinker, a steady supporter of the late Charles Bradlaugh, and since then a no less steady supporter of the N. S. S. and the Secular Society, Limited. His name appeared in almost every list of subscriptions. We beg to tender our profound sympathy to Mrs. Marks in her bereavement.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Christian Charity in China."

ALDGATE PUBLIC BATHS (Goulston-street): 7.30, W. Heaford, "Some Fallacies of Theism."

BATTERSEA BATHS (Latchmere road, Battersea): 7.30, C. Watts, "The Science of Life."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Vengeance."

WELLINGTON HALL (Almeida-street, Upper-street, Islington): December 10, at 8, A. B. Moss, "Christianity and Evolution."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, John M. Robertson, "The Future of South Africa."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, A lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall); 6 30, Angus Mackay, "All Men are Liars."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, H. Thompson, "The Great Earth Sculptor." With lantern slides.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, A. B. Moss, "Shakespeare."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): H. Percy Ward—11.30, "Robert Burns"; 2.30, "The Foolishness of Prayer"; 6.30, "Thomas Paine and his *Age of Reason*." (Committee meeting at 1 p.m.)

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, J. Birks, "A Pressing Need."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, G. H. Perris, "Does Trade Follow the Flag?"

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Haydon, "The Riddle of the Universe."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. A. Rogerson, "Our Relationship with the Simplest Types of Life." Lantern views by A. Flatters.

PONTYPRIDD (Empire Theatre): 11, Rev. E. Treharne-Jones, "Christian Morality"; 2.30, S. Holman; 6.30, Rev. E. Treharne-Jones, "Christianity a Myth."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Joseph McCabe—3, "The Origin of Life"; 7, "Death, and Afterwards." Tea at 5.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 50. SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

Principle or Policy: Which?

I HAVE recently been somewhat in a state of perturbation in consequence of Mr. George Jacob Holyoake's "change of front" in regard to the use of the word "Atheism." The new attitude he has taken in reference to the employment of this term is calculated not only to perplex some of his friends, but also to gratify a few of his (in a theological sense) enemies. The former have always supposed him to be an Atheist, while some among the latter profess to see in his recently-published statements upon Agnosticism a desire to modify his once pronounced views as to the correctness of the Atheistic position. Now, anything from the pen of my highly-esteemed friend, Mr. Holyoake, is of special interest to me, for the reason that he was the first Secular propagandist who, by his calm reasoning, his argumentative advocacy, and his gentlemanly manners upon the platform, induced me to forsake the religion of my youth, and to accept Secularism as the "one thing needful" in the regulation of my duties in daily life. I am, therefore, particularly anxious that his present attitude towards Atheism should be clearly understood, in order that both his friends and foes may know exactly what his opinion now is upon the question.

This is the more necessary because many besides myself have always looked upon the Father of Secularism as "a guide, philosopher, and friend." I hope, therefore, Mr. Holyoake will be good enough to notice what I am here writing, which, he may be assured, is penned in no spirit of antagonism, but purely from a desire to know *why* he prefers to substitute another word for Atheism, for the use of which he once avowed his preference. In his *Trial of Theism* he wisely wrote that Atheism "is a defiant, militant word. There is a ring of decision about it. There is no cringing in it. It keeps no terms with superstition. It makes war, and means it. It carries you away from the noisome word-jugglery of the conventional pulpits, and brings you face to face with nature." Now, this is a high tribute in favor of adhering to the term "Atheist." It may not, however, be an adequate reason to Mr. Holyoake for retaining its use, hence my solicitation that he should explain himself clearly and fully upon the subject. He once wrote, when refuting the fallacy that "a good God has designed the suffering which makes the breast to sigh and the earth to seem sad":—

> "There is far more reason in Atheism which confesses, 'all this is not to be understood'; and far more reverence in Atheism which refuses to ascribe suffering to God; and far more modesty in Atheism which prefers to maintain silence where speech is a contradiction of itself, or an imputation upon Deity."

Here Mr. Holyoake claims reason, reverence, and modesty for Atheism. He also says: "Affirmative Atheism of the intellect is a proud, honest, intrepid, self-respecting attitude of the mind.....It has a definite foundation, or it could claim no position, and would deserve none." What more can be said on behalf of Agnosticism? It is true Mr. Holyoake refers, in his *Trial of Theism*, to what he terms "negative Atheism of mere ignorance, of insensibility, of lust, of gluttony and drunkenness, of egotism or vanity, whose talk is outrage and whose spirit is blasphemy." It was painful to me to read such words from the pen of one who himself nobly endured imprisonment for alleged blasphemy. The words are more like the "sound and fury, signifying nothing," of an indiscriminate member of the Christian Evidence Society than those of the philosophic founder of Secularism.

But is such a description of Atheism accurate? With the profoundest respect for my venerable friend, I venture to say that it is not. No Atheism is mere negation; but, if it were, is it not better to accept a negative truth rather than a positive error? Neither is there an Atheism of "mere ignorance, lust, gluttony, and drunkenness." I say, with the Right Hon. William Pitt, that "Atheism furnishes no man with arguments to be vicious." This evidently was Professor Tyndall's opinion when he wrote:—

> "If I wished to find men who are scrupulous in their adherence to engagements, whose words are their bond, and to whom moral shiftiness of any kind is subjectively unknown; if I wanted a loving father, a faithful husband, an honorable neighbor, and a just citizen, I should seek him and find him among the band of Atheists."

It is possible that there are bad men who have no belief in God, but this may be true also of some Agnostics, as well as of many believers in God. It would be unfair, however, to blame either of the three isms for the wrong-doings of its adherents.

The reasons given by Mr. Holyoake, in his recent "Defence of Agnosticism," for preferring the term to that of Atheism are not, to my mind, conclusive. Is there any real difference in the meaning of the two words? I submit there is not. Both represent a condition of the mind where no belief in God obtains. Mr. Holyoake says that between Agnosticism and Atheism there "is the wide distinction between knowing and not knowing." It is not quite clear what is here meant by the phrase, "knowing and not knowing." What does either the Atheist or the Agnostic know that the other either does not or cannot know? The knowledge of both is confined to natural phenomena, beyond which they cannot go. Neither *denies* the existence of God, but both admit that they know nothing about him. Where, then, is there any difference between the two? Mr. Bradlaugh, who frankly avowed his Atheism, said:—

> "The Atheist does not say 'there is no God,' but he says: 'I know not what you mean by God; I am without idea of God; the word "God" is, to me, a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation. I do not deny God, because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception, and the conception of which, by its affirmer, is so imperfect that he is unable to define it to me.'"

Now here, according to the ablest and most pronounced Atheist of modern times, Atheism, no more than Agnosticism, denies the existence of God, but only certain absurd representations of him. And for doing this Mr. Bradlaugh is described by Mr. Holyoake as "the most absolute Agnostic of his time." If this be so, I again ask, Wherein does Agnosticism differ from Atheism? But Mr. Holyoake himself denies certain representations of God. Here are his words:—

> "God cannot be a First Cause—all cause is bifold. God cannot be a Power—that is an attribute of matter, and never impersonal. It cannot be a Spirit—that is the negation of matter, the negation of all we know. It cannot be Light—light is subject to law. It cannot be Intelligence—that grows, and has conditions of development. It cannot be Consciousness—that is human. It cannot be Love—that is a personal attribute called forth by external and relative objects. It cannot be a Principle—that is neither a material force nor a logical rule. God is the eternal, unanswered *Why?* to which no man has replied."
>
> "The definer seems to overlook that a man may deny the possibility of any idea of God—or deny the possibility

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of God, as involving contradictions so far as they have as yet been explained—and yet not assume the infinite pretension of declaring that nature conceals no fact of God. Does the most absolute Atheism do more than declare the secret of nature to be unrevealed?" (*Trial of Theism*, pp. 56 and 181).

Here Mr. Holyoake, correctly I think, combines the "knowing and not knowing," and thereby shows the similarity of Atheism and Agnosticism. Evidently he knows enough to deny some things, but he has not sufficient knowledge to deny everything. This I take to be the Atheistic position. Will my friend, Mr. Holyoake, kindly say if in this he recognises any opposition to the principle of Agnosticism? And, at the same time, will he state what is the *essential* difference, so far as being "without God" is concerned, between disbelief and non-belief?

Of course, the question of policy may be considered as deserving consideration. That a wise policy is better than a foolish one goes without saying. But my impression is that the true policy to follow on all occasions in our advocacy is to say what we mean with frankness, and with a due regard to the opinions of others. Atheists and Agnostics alike are "looked down" upon by some, but, when the nature of their belief and disbelief is better understood, their views will be less of an impediment than they are now to the recognition of their services to humanity. Firm adherence to principle should be the basis of our policy. In Mr. Holyoake's own words:—

> "Truth is the child of courage as well as of honor. The high-spirited alone are habitually frank. It is weakness to affect singularity, but it is worse than weakness not to be singular if the singularity lie in acting out a conviction of the right. Better even be eccentric than false. It is sometimes dangerous to dissent from the public and painful to dissent from your friends. It is often very *expensive* to have an opinion of your own, and avow it; but the partisan of truth must be content to brave many penalties; and he is badly educated in his art if he is not apprised of this. He must leave to valetudinarian moralists to utter timid, base, and comfort-seeking acquiescence in the hypocrisies of sects and society" (*Trial of Theism*, p. 232).

I have thus submitted a few points for Mr. Holyoake's consideration, and I sincerely hope that he will notice them, in order that his many admirers may know to what extent he has changed his mind, and what are his precise reasons for changing not his principles, but his policy.

Charles Watts.

Christianity and Civilisation.—III.

The Position of Woman.

Professor Orr's next example of the benefits conferred on the world by Christianity is concerned with the position of woman and the family under Pagan and Christian rule respectively. One might be surprised at the Professor's remarks on this head had not long acquaintance with the methods of Christian apologists rendered one surprise-proof. The power of reiteration is all-conquering, and this particular dogma concerning the elevating influence of Christianity on woman has been, and is, made so frequently that doubtless a good number really believe it from the sheer effect of so often hearing themselves state it.

It is, of course, easy to dwell on the wrongs of women—as it is on the wrongs of men, for that matter, as no class can claim to have been treated with absolute fairness. The question, however, is one of comparison and tendencies; of comparison in the shape of contrasting woman's position in pre-Christian times with her position in Christian ages, and of tendencies in the shape of studying the general estimation in which woman was held at different periods, and the general trend of the society in which she was living. And it may be as well here to say a word upon the method of comparison usually adopted by Christian apologists. To compare the end of the nineteenth century with the beginning of the first is not only unfair, but stupid. If matters are better now than they were then, the obvious retort is that the mere lapse of time ought to have brought that result about, independent of the introduction of any new force. A civilisation never stands still—it either advances or recedes; and one can usually account for either movement by the operation of internal forces. If we wish to test whether or not Christianity has been a power for good, the only sound method is to examine the tendencies manifested by pre-Christian society, and then discover whether these tendencies were realised or perverted when once society was definitely under Christian rule.

And, without taking up any such absurd position as would be involved in the statement that woman's position in pre-Christian society was idyllic, it is well within the bounds of historic truth to assert that her position, both as a member of the family and as a unit of the State, was superior to what it afterwards became under Christian rule. There is no need to enter into a detailed examination of woman's position in all the states of antiquity; so far as we are directly concerned, the wide-spreading dominion of Rome limits our comparison to an examination of her position under the Roman Empire, Pagan and Christian.

The habit of labelling all domestic life under the Roman Empire as impure, and all women as corrupt, is so confirmed with Christian apologists that it is necessary to deal somewhat with this charge at the outset. To any sober student of history such charges are self-destructive. The unit of social life is as much the family as the individual, and civilisation would have been simply impossible had family life been nearly as corrupt as many Christian writers would have us believe. The truth is that nearly all such statements are exaggerations based upon incidental references in the writings of satirists or moralists. Juvenal mentions an anonymous case of a woman having had eight husbands, therefore *all* Roman women married a similar number of times. Seneca says that "certain of the noble ladies count their years, not by the number of consuls, but by the number of their husbands," and it is at once declared that *all* noble Roman ladies did the same. An impartial reader would at once put the statement down as a wild exaggeration, if only on the evidence of Seneca's further declaration, that women are not satisfied unless they have a paramour for every hour in the day.* In neither case are names given; both are clearly extreme statements made by incensed moralists; yet it is upon evidence such as this that Christian charges are made. Even allowing the pictures by Juvenal of Roman society to stand, equally dark ones might be drawn, and have been drawn, of Christian society as late as the days of Charles II. and George III. The records of Charles the Second's court, as pictured in the *Memoirs of the Count Grammont*, allowing for difference of time and place, are little better than the society drawn for us by Juvenal or Martial.

The dishonest—I use this phrase deliberately—feature of the Christian attack is the careful avoidance of the other side of Roman female and domestic life that must be known to every reader of Roman history. We are not concerned with the very early years of the Roman nation, when, in common with all primitive peoples, the husband was truly the head of the family and possessed almost absolute power over all its members, but with Roman society as it was when Christianity entered it. And here we find them, instead of being "subject to the absolute authority" of the male, occupying a position of personal and proprietary independence such as it has hardly been their lot to enjoy since. To begin with, marriage was dependent upon the consent of both parties. Both parties must have reached manhood and womanhood, and polygamy was absolutely prohibited. In some cases the consent of the parent was necessary, but a father might be compelled to give his consent if he had no reasonable ground for withholding it. The estates of a wife "could neither be alienated nor mortgaged by a prodigal husband" (Gibbon). These remained her absolute property; and, in case of a divorce, the dowry that she may have received was given to one or the other, returned to the father, or shared by the divorced parties, as circumstances might direct. There was thus no need for a "Married Woman's Property Act," as the idea that a wife became part of her husband's property was of later Christian origin. In the matter of inheritance, too, male and female children were upon a legal

* *On Benefits*, iii., 16.

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equality sharing the estate between them—another striking contrast to later Christian legislation. The law of divorce was the same on both sides; and the wife was thus spared many of the iniquities of our later civilisation.* Nor does it appear, as the Rev. Principal Donaldson remarks, that "the Roman idea of marriage had.....a bad effect on either the happiness or morals of the women," or that "divorces were very frequent in ordinary society."

In striking contrast to the condition of things during the Dark and Middle Ages, we find that women helped their husbands in the government of provinces, figured as writers, played no insignificant part in public affairs, pleaded their own cases in courts of law, and held public meetings in order to induce the Senate to agree to such modifications in the law as were thought desirable. The wife, in short, was rapidly taking her place as the equal of the husband; and the statement put into the mouth of Brutus's wife by Shakespeare, demanding to know her husband's inmost mind "By the right and virtue of my place," otherwise "Portia is Brutus's harlot, not his wife," is but a transcript of her speech as reported by Plutarch. Indeed, one has only to call to mind such characters as Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi; Julia, the wife of Pompey; Octavia, the wife of Antony; Calpurnia, the wife of Pliny—out of many numerous others that might be named, to realise how villainously false is the ordinary Christian presentment of Roman women.

I will conclude this portion of my case by a few brief testimonies from prominent writers. The Rev. James Donaldson says:—"The [Roman] marriage was a community in all affairs, and within the home the utmost diligence, reverence, and harmony prevailed."† Gibbon points out (chap. xliv.) that, instead of the later marriage laws inflicting hardships on wives, "the prevailing institutions were least favorable to the males." Sir Henry Maine, in his treatise on *Ancient Law*, says that the Roman lawyers had "assumed the equality of the sexes as a principle of the law of equity. .....The situation of the Roman woman, whether married or single, became one of great personal and proprietary independence; but Christianity tended somewhat from the commencement to narrow this remarkable liberty.....The prevailing state of religious sentiment may explain why modern jurisprudence has adopted these rules concerning the position of women which belong to an imperfect civilisation.....No society which preserves any tincture of Christian institutions is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by middle Roman law." Professor Dill is equally emphatic:—

> "The Roman matron, from the earliest times, had secured to her by family religion a dignified and respected position.....In the early years of the Empire.....her status, both in law and in fact, really rose. There can be no doubt that the Roman lady of the better sort, without becoming less virtuous and respected, became far more accomplished and attractive.....She became more and more the equal and companion of her husband, and her influence on public affairs became more decided."‡

Finally, Lecky says:—

> "In the legends of early Rome we have ample evidence both of the high moral excellence of women and of their prominence in Roman life..... For five hundred years, it was said, there was no such thing as a divorce in Rome.....[Women] arrived, during the Empire, at a point of freedom and dignity which they subsequently lost, and have never altogether regained.....The legal position of the wife had become one of complete independence, while her social position was one of great dignity."§

It cannot, then, in face of these facts, be denied that Christianity had at least one good foundation to work on, had one of its objects been the establishment of the equality of the sexes. Such an advocacy could not have struck the educated Roman as anything startlingly strange, seeing that it would only have been another expression of forces already at work. But Christianity was largely an Eastern religion, and it brought with it all the worst Eastern ideas concerning women, which, when allied with its teachings on the origin of evil and kindred matters, could only set up a retrogressive tendency. To take its "sacred" books first. In the old Bible woman is everywhere in complete subordination to man. Created as an afterthought, lumped in in the Ten Commandments as one of the articles of property belonging to her husband, she played no part in any of the religious services, at which her presence was neither necessary nor, presumably, desirable; while the most lavish praise bestowed on any woman in the Bible is given to one who had just murdered a man who was sleeping in her tent under promise of hospitality. In no case do the types of womanhood contained in the Bible approach for dignity and purity those of Roman history or Greek poetry.

As regards marriage customs, we read that parents could, and did, sell their daughters either into slavery or marriage (Exodus xxi. 7-8, Genesis xxiv. 53); and in certain cases the father not only claimed the daughter as property, but also the daughter's children (Genesis xxxi. 43). Abraham sent his servants to procure Rebekah for Isaac, and there is no mention made of the woman's consent being necessary. Evidence of buying wives may be also found, among other places, in the story of Jacob and Leah, and in the book of Ruth (iv. 9, 10). The act of divorce was charmingly easy. "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes because he hath found some uncleanness in her, then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of the house." The assumed inferiority and subordination of woman is seen still more clearly in that the period of purification set apart for the mother after the birth of a child was seven days in the case of a boy, fourteen days in the case of a girl—the uncleanness being so much greater.

Polygamy was general. Nearly all the Old Testament characters indulged in this practice, and are thus in striking contrast to Greek and Roman national figures, not one of whom possessed more than one wife. God himself says to David: "I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's *wives* into thy bosom" (2 Samuel xii. 7-8); so that the practice has, for a Christian, the highest sanction. The truth is that monogamy comes to us from Greek and Roman sources, not from the teachings of either Old or New Testament. There is not a line in either book to prohibit it. Paul's advice that a *bishop* should have only one wife carries on the face of it evidence that more than one wife was permitted elsewhere.

C. Cohen.

(To be continued.)

* For authorities see Gibbon, chapter 44; Ramsay's *Manual of Roman Antiquities;* articles on Roman law in Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities.*

† *Contemporary Review*, May, 1888.

‡ *Roman Society in Last Century of Western Empire*, p. 137.

§ *Hist. Europ. Morals*, ii., pp. 298, 300, 304, 306.

Death of Mr. Samuel Hartmann.

By the death of Mr. Samuel Hartmann the Freethought cause has lost one of its most loyal and devoted servants. He was a vice-president as well as honorary treasurer of the National Secular Society; a member of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited; and a member of the Board of Directors of the Freethought Publishing Company. His death occurred on Monday, December 3, but the news was not communicated to us for nearly three days, so it could not appear in last week's *Freethinker*. His remains were cremated at Woking on the following Friday. Unfortunately, those in charge of the funeral arrangements made it only too obvious that the presence of his old Freethought colleagues would not be welcome; and, in the circumstances, the N. S. S. could not be represented.

The first time I remember seeing Mr. Hartmann was on the morning of my release from Holloway Gaol. He attended the public breakfast at the Hall of Science, and was introduced to me as one who had taken and distributed several copies of the *Freethinker* every week during my imprisonment. The last time I saw him was on Friday evening, November 30, at the annual general meeting of the Secular Society, Limited, when he thanked me for devising and establishing that Incorporation, which he regarded as of the very highest importance to the future of our movement.

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Each of the three bodies already mentioned has passed a resolution of profound regret at Mr. Hartmann's death, and of warm appreciation of his intelligence and character. Personally, I feel his loss most keenly. I shall miss his smiling, appreciative face at my lectures. I shall miss him still more in connection with the N. S. S. and the Incorporated Society. His suggestions were nearly always valuable, but he did not frown and complain if they were not accepted. He understood that he had a right to be heard, but no right to force another's judgment. Firm and stedfast as he was on grounds of principle, he was mild, placable, and tolerant. His good temper was almost invincible, and his good nature was not for show occasions, but for common intercourse. Months ago I told how gallantly he stood by the Freethought Publishing Company, when we were tossed from pillar to post in searching for suitable and available premises. I shall miss him most of all on that Company's Board.

Perhaps the reader will pardon me for indulging in a personal note. I am human like others—"feel want, taste grief, need friends"—and in the pauses of my work I sometimes have an oppressive sense of isolation. There are moments when the strongest spirit of duty needs fortifying. In such moments I have found support in my friend who is dead. He believed in me, he appreciated what I was doing and trying to do, he had ever the kind word of encouragement for me, even if he had to dissent in some particulars. A meaner man might have been soured by the failure of his Financial Scheme. He quietly recognised that the conditions were against it, in spite of his own generous contribution of £50 for the first year. He owed me no grudge when I had to intervene again as President; on the contrary, he urged and cheered me on. He had no paltry egotism; his one desire was for the good of the movement. Only a few weeks before his death he wrote me a touching letter that brought tears to my eyes. He wanted to make a sacrifice for me, though I could not accept it. And now I shall treasure his letter as one of the rare, inestimable things that help to sweeten memory and correct the inevitable bitterness of public life.

Mr. Hartmann knew that he was marked to die. He was aware that his complaint might kill him at any hour. He told me so plainly. Two years ago he fully recognised the precariousness of his life. No man ever faced death more serenely. G. W. Foote.

Freethought in Germany.—II.

(Concluded from page 763.)

Owing to the number and variety of the Freethinking Societies existing in Germany, exact and exhaustive statistics of membership cannot be given. Several Societies are, in fact, connected both with the German Freethought Federation and with the Federation of the "Freireligiose" Congregations. The Berlin Society attached to the "Freireligiose" numbers about 4,500 members, without counting the children belonging to the body and receiving the advantage of its purely secular training. Outside the active militant supporters of the movement there are some 20,000 passive unorganised supporters of the party, who, though abjuring every species of church conformity, take no collective concern in the propaganda of Freethought. Besides the groups marshalled under the banners of the above-mentioned Federations, there are in Germany many Societies unconnected with either Federation. It is, therefore, difficult to give precise figures concerning the numerical strength of the movement in the Kaiser's Empire; but, judging from the fact that forty-eight Freethought Societies have been counted by my friend, Ida Altmann, as having a membership of about 25,000, some faint idea may be gleaned of the extent and influence of Freethought in the country. Take Berlin, for example. Besides the one Society already referred to, three or four other Freethought Societies exist in Berlin whose collective membership is estimated at quite another thousand. At Wiesbaden, again, the Society has about 400 active members, whilst throughout Germany the number of militant members of the Freethought Federation alone amounts at the least to 6,000. We in England, who know what a mere handful of determined men and women have been able to accomplish against the hooligan hosts of bigotry, aided by the long purse of plutocratic piety, and by all the unscrupulous arts of lying apologetics, will not be disposed to under-value the enormous potential force, intellectual and moral, which a body of six thousand determined, high-minded men and women have it in their power to let loose for the overthrow of a superstition which has been discredited and refuted a hundred times over in the present century, and which simply lingers either as an idle, simple-minded conformity to established superstitions, or as the vile parasite of power and pelf.

At Wiesbaden the members are chiefly of the middle class, whilst at Berlin they belong for the most part to the working classes. The meetings of the Society are open to the public as well as to actual members, and I am glad to know from Ida Altmann (to whom I am greatly indebted for valuable information utilised in the present article) that many visitors, some of distinguished character—professors, artists, merchants, and others—frequently attend these meetings.

Our readers will be glad to learn that there are no less than seven Freethinking papers—*Septem contra Christum*—published in Germany. I subjoin the names of these journals by way of record, placing in parentheses the towns where they are issued:—1, *Die freie Jugend* (Berlin); 2, *Der Freidenker* (Wiesbaden); 3, *Freireligiöses Familienblatt* (Breslau); 4, *Freie Glocken* (Gotha); 5, *Menschentum* (Gotha); 6, "*Es werde Licht*" (München); 7, *Die Morgenröte* (Offenbach). The first on the above list is edited by Dr. Bruno Wille, and is now in its nineteenth volume; and, as the name implies, is issued specially for the young people. It is an admirably produced eight-paged paper, well written and excellently printed, and contains poems, sketches, and instructive articles and addresses adapted to the growing minds of children. The *Freidenker*, which appears fortnightly, is the organ of the German Freethought Federation. Besides these papers there is a valuable body of popular literature, which, I am glad to hear, is well supported by the public. Several of these pamphlets, together with a short catalogue of other similar publications, are now before me as I write, and are alike popular in style and learned in tone.

The "Freireligiose Gemeinde" celebrated its jubilee in 1895. The title of "Free Religious Congregation," assumed by the body, was necessitated by the odious intolerance of the law against the participation of women and children in the triumph of the principles of Freethought. But, under the thin disguise of a seeming religiosity, the very thoughtful and learned section of German Freethinkers who ticket themselves with the above title are now enabled to give scope within the party for the free play of woman's intellect, and to afford the children of Freethinkers the benefits of a Freethought education. How hollow is the pretence that Christianity elevates woman and imparts to her a degree of freedom elsewhere unknown may be seen from the experience of the German Freethought party, face to face with the narrow bigotry of the Christian spirit. In the empire ruled by the Kaiser and dragooned by God, women are debarred from attending meetings which are avowedly and nakedly Freethought in character; they are only permitted to take part in the free movement of thought in Germany to-day under the condition that they shall sail under the flag of a society christened with an evasive title—a title, it is true, intended to throw dust in the eyes of the persecuting Sauls who are never so happy as when they are breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the enemies of superstition.

The "Freireligiose," like their freethinking *confrères* in France and Belgium, have found it useful to counteract the attractions of certain religious festivals, around which many social usages and traditional memories have grown, that have become, as it were, woven into the texture of the popular thought and imagination. Acting on the principle that a superstition is only refuted when it is replaced, the typical Christian feasts have been secularised and shorn of all supernatural signification. For example, at Easter, instead of celebrating the resurrection of a dead Jew, the

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"Freireligiose" commemorate the re-awakening of life, both in its moral and physical aspects, after the slumber of the night of winter, into the glories of spring-tide and the flowering of new hopes in the soil of man's mind; at Whitsun, the victory of the human intellect over the brute forces of nature, and the quickening burst of inspiring ideas poured out, not through the spirit of a ghostly God, but evolved by the quite un-pentecostal process of widening the love and deepening the thought of our common humanity. There are no ceremonies and no mysticism introduced into these Freethought feasts. Lectures and songs appropriate to the event form the staple of the various feasts. On these occasions the attendance is always much more numerous than at ordinary times, and the feasts seem to be appreciated by the public as something far better than what is offered in the churches. They are also found of especial value in weaning the young from the enticements of theological flummery and mummery.

In Germany, as elsewhere, the bigots surround the Freethinkers with every legal and social difficulty, in order to prevent the rising generation from escaping from the theological net. Whilst in some towns the lecturers are permitted by the authorities to give lessons of "free religion" to the children of their members, elsewhere—as in Berlin, Stettin, and other towns in which the Freethinkers are known to be Socialists—the Government, at one time, prohibited the giving of any such lessons. To-day "Suffer little children to come unto me" means nothing else than the frightened cry of trade jealousy and narrow-minded intolerance. Both Dr. Wille and Ida Altmann have actually been imprisoned for no other crime than that of attempting to impart moral lessons to the children of freethinking parents. Special addresses are now given to the children every Sunday morning; but, in order to evade the law and rob the bigots of the savage satisfaction of refuting their opponents by the argument of imprisonment, the lecturer is changed every week. A single lecture can more easily pass with impunity than a whole course of lectures delivered by the same individual. The authorities, I learn, seem appeased for awhile, and for some time past the lectures in question have not been interfered with.

At Berlin there are four special propagandists (they are called "*Sprecher*"—*i.e.*, Speaker): Wilhelm Bœlsche, Bruno Wille, Albert Gehrke, and Ida Altmann. One of these persons gives an address every Sunday and holiday, so that about sixty lectures a year are delivered. Lecturers are exchanged between the various towns. For instance, Breslau or Magdeburg will send a lecturer, like Prediger Dr. Kramer, from Magdeburg; Prediger Tschirn, from Breslau; or Prediger Georg Welker, from Wiesbaden; and the vacancies created by these visits will be filled up by one or other of the lecturers from Berlin. It will be observed that in the three towns named outside Berlin, instead of the term "Sprecher," the strange-sounding title (for a Secular advocate) of "Prediger" (Preacher) is adopted. Another soft sop to the clerical Cerberus!

Religion in Germany is simply a matter of statecraft and vested interests. It is a pious pretence to believe what everybody knows to be false. Nobody there goes to church except the parsons, who earn their stipends, or the officials, who occasionally fulfil an empty function by dancing attendance at the throne of grace. The Emperor is pious, but the Empire is quite the reverse. In vain the Government plays court to God Almighty by appointing for the nation a day of penitence (*Busstag*) every 21st of September. The people remain obdurately impenitent. The Berlin correspondent of *Le Petit Belge* (for a copy of which paper I am indebted to my friend, J.-B. Demoulin, of Brussels, to whom I am also under deep obligation for having furnished me with the valuable information which enabled me to write my last article) points out what an empty show is all this national pretence of penitential contrition. Protestantism in Germany, he says, has for a long time become a system of Rationalism pure and simple. The true, believing Protestant, and the parson who still regards the Scriptures as the source of truth and the supreme testimony to the divinity of Christ, are the exception in Germany. The orthodox believers form only a small section of the community—comprising, it is true, some very distinguished personalities, but exerting no influence either upon the masses of the people or upon the governing classes. As regards the *Busstag*, it is a flagrant farce. Out of the thirty millions of Protestants in Germany, not even one poor, miserable million observe this solemn Day of Penance and Prayer instituted by the Kaiser for the gratification of Christ. At Berlin this year (and one year telleth another) the conventicles remained as empty as on any "common or garden" Sunday on which the preachers drone their prayers and preachments before a congregation consisting usually of a dozen yawning officials, whose duty it is to expiate their positions by being piously bored at divine worship. As for the people at large, their penitential observances take the form of crowding into the innumerable dancing halls and concert rooms on the outskirts of the town. At night everybody comes home glutted with dance and song, and the farcical fast is kept going by copiously consuming bocks of lager beer. As a matter of fact, except in a few belated and bigoted parts, Protestantism in Germany is a spent squib. The only sincere Christians, taking the average type of "believer" as the standard, are found amongst the Catholics. The ragged remnant of the true believers are between the deep sea of scepticism and the devil of Catholicism. Whilst they abuse the Papists, the Freethinking element grows stronger and stronger within the fold of Protestantism itself. The Rationalising section, who yield up everything except their salaries, are no more successful in catching the public ear than the out-and-out orthodox of the Stöcker type. Both these sets of sky-pilots preach fifty-two Sundays a-year before empty benches, whilst the great world outside gaily treads the primrose path of eternal torment without caring a *denier* about its ultimate damnation. At Berlin very few parsons cling to orthodox doctrine. Their view of the Bible is that it is merely a book with a symbolical meaning, and not intended to establish dogma. *Sic transit gloria Christi.*

Christianity in Germany is doomed. There, as elsewhere, it gives its sanction to every species of reaction and rascality. In Germany the odor of sanctity is especially rank. Christian rapine and villainy, perpetrated in China quite recently by order of the Imperial instigator of wholesale slaughter and no quarter, cannot fail to provoke a healthy revulsion of feeling in the minds of the thoughtful German people against a creed in whose name such inhumanities are committed, and by whose teachers such crimes are condoned. The Imperial War-Lord and the Prince of Peace—viewed historically—are a congenial pair—*arcades ambo.* To the German Socialists, whose cry is "International Solidarity"; to the German Freethinkers, whose aim is "Intellectual Freedom," the hearts of all English Freethinkers will go out with warmest sympathy for the realisation of these high ideals, and with fervent hope that the day is not far distant when, instead of being the paradise of the drill-sergeant, Germany may be free to expand her mighty energies of labor, of learning, and of love, not for the stultification of her patient people and the enslavement of her neighbors, but for the enrichment of the life of humanity and the peace and well-ordering of the commonwealth of civilisation.

William Heaford.

Forethought.

In early stages of theological belief, men regarding every incident that happens to them as the result of a special divine decree sometimes esteem it a test of faith and a form of duty to take no precautions for the future, but to leave questions of food and clothing to Providential interposition. On the other hand, in an industrial civilisation prudent forethought is regarded not simply as lawful, but as a duty, and a duty of the very highest order. A good man of the industrial type deems it a duty not to marry till he has ensured the maintenance of a possible family; if he possesses children, he regulates his expenses not simply by the relation of his income to his immediate wants, but with a constant view to the education of his sons, to the portioning of his daughters, to the future necessities and careers of each member of his family. Constant forethought is the guiding principle of his whole life. No single circumstance is regarded as a better test of the civilisation of a people than the extent to which it is diffused among them. The old doctrine virtually disappears, and is interpreted to mean nothing more than that we should accept with resignation what no efforts and no forethought could avert.—*W. H. Lecky.*

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Acid Drops.

What on earth does Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal leader in the House of Commons, mean by reading the Government lessons in piety? When the Queen's Speech was read, this gentleman rose and asked a Sunday-school question. "Has there ever," he enquired, "been a Speech before which did not end with an invocation for the blessing of Almighty God on our proceedings?" He put the query very solemnly, but he was, nevertheless, only playing to the religious gallery. It stands to reason that he does not believe in the Almighty's blessing on the present House of Commons, for he believes it ought to contain a Liberal majority, whereas it contains a woful Liberal minority—which is presumably the work of Old Nick.

Mr. Keir Hardie's "Jesus-Christism" has been badly hit at Leicester. The Independent Labor Party there put forward two candidates, neither of whom was satisfactory with regard to "Secular Education." Mr. F. J. Gould went straight on that ticket as a really "independent" candidate, and he polled 15,669 votes, while Messrs. Hubbard and Peacock, who expected to win on "Labor" without ideas, polled 9,896 and 9,306 respectively. Perhaps this will be a lesson to the Independent Labor Party. They cannot remain merely "political" in the matter of education.

Sir Robert Hart knows as much about China as any living European, and he does not take a very hopeful view of the future relations of China to the Western world. However mistaken and hasty the Boxers may be, he says they are patriots, being a kind of volunteer army spontaneously raised to resist the aggression of foreigners. In the course of time there will be twenty millions of them, all drilled and armed, and when that day comes let the foreigners beware. The China of the year 2000 will be very different from the China of 1900. The "yellow peril" is already threatening. By-and-bye old scores will be wiped off with interest, everything foreigners have taken from China will be taken back, and the Chinese flag and Chinese arms will be "carried into many a place that even fancy will not suggest to-day." The Christian Powers are stirring the slothful colossus into action. "You are all too anxious to awake us and start us on a new road," said a great Prime Minister of China fifty years ago, "and you will do it; but you will all regret it, for, once awaking and started, we shall go fast and far—farther than you think—much farther than you want!" And "his words are very true," says Sir Robert Hart.

There are only two ways of peace with China for the Christian Powers in the future. One is the partition of the Celestial Empire. But that is considered by Sir Robert Hart as impracticable. The other is the conversion of China to Christianity. But this also would be "miraculous," and is clearly improbable. The Chinese have had too many object lessons in the moral value of Christianity. Sir Robert Hart himself ends his *Fortnightly Review* article with these significant words: "Meanwhile the once-crowded Peking is a desert, and the first few days of foreign occupation have seen much that need not have occurred and will certainly be regretted." This "much" includes unlimited looting, wanton destruction, reckless massacre, and horrible violation of Chinese women. Scenes were enacted that newspaper correspondents dared not describe; and when a French general was remonstrated with, he had the impudence to say that "It was impossible to restrain the gallantry of French soldiers." Gallantry! forsooth. What a word for the vilest outrage that one human being can inflict on another!

Sir Robert Hart does not appear to be in love with missions or missionaries. He notes that the Chinese converts got "their religious teachers, more especially the Roman Catholics, to interfere on their behalf in litigation, etc." He also refers to the "arrangement by which missionaries were to ride in green chairs and be recognised as the equals of Governors and Viceroys." Dear, amiable apostles of the meek and lowly Jesus! Butter would hardly melt in their mouths at missionary meetings in England, but what airs they give themselves amongst the heathen! They come out in their true characters then. And is it any wonder that the Chinese mean to get rid of them bag and baggage?

A mad sailor, with a lighted cigar in his mouth, entered a Congregational church at South Shields, forced his way into the pulpit, and offered to preach the sermon. The result was a "painful sensation" and the abrupt closing of the service. The mad sailor's sermon was not heard, and the congregation will never know what they lost.

There is nothing that can be fancied which has not happened; for, as Bacon remarked, the variety of nature infinitely exceeds the imagination of man. Mr. Foote once wrote "A Mad Sermon," which is included in *Comic Sermons and Other Fantasies*. This sermon was supposed to be delivered by a lunatic who took the place of the chaplain on one occasion.

Arthur Coningham, one of the Australian cricketers who visited England in 1893, is suing for a divorce from his wife at Sydney. The co-respondent is Father O'Haran, Cardinal Moran's secretary. Mrs. Coningham made a confession, which she repeated in the witness-box, and her evidence could not be shaken. Cardinal Moran was called as a witness, but he did not attend until the judge threatened to issue a warrant. The Catholics are up in arms against the husband for daring to expose a priest.

James Bergon is under sentence of death for murdering Margaret Morrison at Liverpool. He was a Catholic and she was a Presbyterian, and that was the beginning of their quarrel. Good old religion!

The Czar's recovery is claimed by the Russian clergy as an answer to their prayers. Had he died, they would have said it was due to something else. The truth is, the Czar is a young man, and he has had the best medical treatment and nursing that could be obtained for love or money. There is very little left to be accounted for by prayer.

Rev. C. M. Sheldon ran the *Topeka Capital* for a week to show how Jesus Christ would edit a newspaper. It was not a brilliantly successful experiment, though we understand that the "What would Jesus do?" editor got £1,000 for the six days' job. Our own Dr. Parker, the reverend oracle of the City Temple, did not approve of Brother Sheldon's lines, and he is going to show how the thing *ought* to be done. From December 17 to December 22 he will edit the London *Sun*—a stupidly named evening paper. He is not going to exclude wicked news. Oh dear no! He says there is wicked news in the Bible. What he will aim at is to touch life at all points, above all "as the man of God striving towards high purpose, and conscious of high endeavor, would touch it." Will he get £1,000 for *that* job? Or say £600—to allow for the difference between American and English rates?

Dr. Parker is going to edit the *Sun* during the week before Christmas. That is usually the dullest week in the year for newspapers. And the proprietors have shown some little shrewdness in allotting that period to the great man. He can't do the paper much harm. But we are getting a trifle sick of all this talk about parsons in newspaper editorial chairs. The novelty of the idea has worn off, and Dr. Parker is not likely to be less of a failure than the gifted Sheldon. In his own modest way he thinks himself equal to any task that suggests itself under the sun. Why doesn't he try his hand at navigating a Transatlantic liner, and take a good load of his admirers on board?

Anent the *Lancet's* warnings as to "Danger in the Chalice"—*i.e.*, the handing of the cup from one communicant to the other to drink from—Mr. W. Batten Doherty writes to the *Record* recommending "simple faith in what our Blessed Lord, the only wise God, has appointed as certain never to bring any injury to any one of His dear people." The *Church Gazette* describes this recommendation as "too silly for words," and adds: "If faith is determined to set itself against obvious facts, we can only say we are sorry."

Some time after the new chaplain in a lunatic asylum had entered upon the discharge of his duties one of the inmates came up to him and said: "I like you better than the other one." "Why?" "Because you are more like us," answered the lunatic.

The Lord Chamberlain has declined to license a play written by the Rev. George Walters, of Sydney (N.S.W.), with the subject and title of *Joseph of Canaan*. By all accounts we haven't lost much. The play has already been performed in Melbourne. We learn that "the incident of Potiphar's wife is treated with simplicity, directness, and dignity." That erring woman is brought to repentance, confesses her sin to her husband, and is pardoned; thus presenting "a picture to fill the soul with pity."

The reason assigned by the Lord Chamberlain for his refusal is that "plays avowedly adapted from the Scriptures are not eligible for license in Great Britain." A great deal seems to depend on the "avowedly." Perhaps, with slightly altered names, the play might have passed the Censor. Certainly it has just as much right to a license as *The Sign of the Cross*. Mr. Martin Harvey wants to know "why, if we may paint pictures, write cantatas, compose poems on the subject of sacred history, are we to be debarred from performing plays?" "What are these Scriptures," he asks,

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"which must stand inviolate from the hands of the dramatist? To a very large extent they are but the history of the Jewish nation."

Thus spake Mr. Martin Harvey at a recent meeting of the Playgoers' Club. In the debate which followed, Mr. Norreys Connell suggested that most of the so-called religious plays were given a pietic touch simply because the Bible is thought to be an excellent advertising medium. Another speaker thought that burlesque might follow the serious Scriptural play, and that we might see Mr. Dan Leno, with a ladder, as Jacob, or (assisted by Mr. Willie Clarkson) as Delilah, with Sandow as Samson. This gentleman, we learn from a lively report in the *Topical Times*, had no faith in "the conscience of the community" in questions affected by the sense of humor.

We thought it was reserved for the *Church Gazette* to lecture dull and indolent country parsons. But the *Church Times* also has now undertaken the *rôle* of "candid friend." In a leading article in its latest issue, it describes a fossilised incumbent who has, "perhaps, held the living for thirty or forty years. There are two services on Sundays; at all other times the church is kept locked. The Holy Eucharist is offered on 'Sacrament Sunday'—*i.e.*, once a month, at mid-day, as an appendix to Matins and sermon—too often with dreadful, though unintentional, irreverence. From Sunday to Sunday the incumbent is occupied in rearing poultry or growing roses. His sermons never go beyond inculcating morality; they contain practically no instruction. When he visits his people, he recommends them to come to church, otherwise he purposely avoids religion as a topic. Occasionally his family promote a parish tea or a concert, which is always fixed for a Friday, because 'the schools are cleaned on Saturday.' And everyone is quite content."

The restraining and strengthening influence of religion has found another exemplification. The Rev. D. H. H. Johnstone, curate of Bolain, near Morpeth, committed suicide last week by shooting himself in the heart with a revolver. He had been in delicate health, and had become despondent. The Bible didn't help him much.

A clergyman was found in the Old Market-place, Grimsby, in a helpless state of intoxication. He had fallen upon his face, which was badly cut, and his trousers were almost torn to shreds. He pleaded guilty to a charge of being drunk and incapable, adding that he was ashamed of the whole thing. He was ordered to pay 13s. fine and costs. A nice sort of a party to solemnise your marriage, baptise your children, and read the Burial Service over your remains.

The Rev. Henry Pelham Stokes, forty-nine, clerk in holy orders, and residing in Conybere-street, Birmingham, has been remanded at Clerkenwell Police-court for obtaining a gold watch and chain and a diamond star brooch of the value of £35 15s. by means of a forged cheque. This, we suppose, was his method of "spoiling the Egyptians."

The creditors of the Rev. T. B. Paynter, clerk in holy orders, Vauxhall Bridge-road, are wondering how they're going to be paid £50,825—liabilities the man of God has incurred—out of assets amounting to £2,875. In future they had better trust in the Lord rather than in the ministers of his Gospel.

The Rev. Alexander Morrison, parish minister of Cross and Burness, Sanday Island, Orkney, has been ordered to pay £100 damages for adultery with the wife of a local doctor. The Rev. Morrison, in one of his letters, wrote: "There is only one alternative, and it is most sweet and pleasant. Morphia excites pleasant dreams, and so does brandy." He had evidently tried both, with adultery intermixed.

A Brannston surgeon has got himself into trouble at Daventry by a mild imitation of Christ's treatment of the money-changers in the Temple. When the offertory-plate was put in front of him, he struck it with his stick, scattering the money on the floor. A month ago he was fined for throwing the offertory-plate and its contents at the churchwarden. He was now sent to prison for fourteen days. They were more lenient in the old Jerusalem.

According to the Rev. E. J. Hutchings—a High Churchman temporarily officiating at the Mission Church of St. Luke, Gellifaslog, Dowlais—one of the greatest sins any member of the Church of England can commit is to enter a Nonconformist place of worship. He said this in the course of a sermon, and the statement caused a member of the congregation to spring to his feet and address to the preacher in a loud voice the question: "What about entering a Roman Catholic church?" A rumpus followed, and the interrogator was called upon by a sidesman to "shut up and sit down." The preacher took no notice of the interruption, but proceeded with his sermon.

At a children's service at a London church the other Sunday a missionary, after telling his youthful flock about the bravery of a soldier at the front, drew a picture of a missionary in China surrounded by a howling mob, and with "no weapon but his Bible." "Both these men were brave, both were fighting," he said; "but one was fighting to kill; the other (the missionary), what was he trying to do with his Bible?" "'It 'em!" piped a very tiny voice.

The Lord did not appear to be much concerned as to "divine service" the other Sunday at Staplegrove Church, near Taunton. He let the electric light go out during the reading of the first lesson, and, as he showed no disposition to turn it on again, the curate pronounced the benediction and dismissed the worshippers. When two or three were gathered together in his name there was darkness in the midst of them.

The Rev. James Simpson fell dead during the quarterly meeting in Lansdowne Church, Montreal.

Dr. Ryle, the new Bishop of Exeter, is said to favor the Higher Criticism. "But," says the *Church Times*, "we believe he holds with the saner school, which sees whither the stalwarts would like to drag them." In other words, he hasn't the courage to follow the criticism to its legitimate conclusions, because it would carry him a little farther than it is convenient to go, especially now that he is a Bishop.

The Ripon Diocesan Conference has been discussing the secular press. Amongst the speakers was the Rev. J. A. Hayden, vicar of Dent, who talked in the oracular style usual with clerics when they know absolutely nothing about their subject. He said that crimes and indecencies should never be reported in a family newspaper. That is exactly what the criminals and offenders would say, and they would make the prohibition apply to newspapers of all kinds—for general as well as for family reading. In many cases publicity has greater terrors for them than any term of imprisonment. But, says the Rev. Hayden, these reports have a tendency to corrupt the minds of the readers. That may be so; but the men of God who circulate the Scriptures indiscriminately amongst the young are not exactly the persons to advance that plea.

The farce of "swearing" the members of the new Parliament has elicited some outspoken remarks from the *Christian World*, which rightly says that the spectacle presented by this ceremony is "not solemn or even edifying. At several tables arranged on the floor with a number of Testaments upon them successive groups of Members, almost jostling each other in their haste to get the thing over, seize a book, follow the gabbled formula, kiss the Testament, sign the roll of Parliament, shake hands with the Speaker, and hurry away to gossip, smoke, or eat and drink. If it is considered necessary at this time of day specially to remind Members of an obligation binding on nearly every one of them from their birth, and on the few exceptions from the time of their naturalisation, we can imagine much more imposing forms of doing this than the one at present in use. For instance, if, as in some historic scenes, the Speaker, with uplifted right hand, made the declaration in the name of the whole House, standing to signify assent, the spectacle would be much more imposing and could hardly be less binding upon the individual conscience than the present scrambling and squalid procedure."

The *C. W.* is, of course, entitled to its opinion as to the more "imposing" character of the procedure it suggests. Certainly the plan would be more expeditious. But is there really any need for such a formality at all?

Lawyers are credited with ingenuity in twisting statutes to their own purposes, but the parsons beat them hollow at that game. The Rev. Canon Knox-Little has just published a work on "Holy Matrimony." In attempting to prove the alleged perpetual virginity of Mary he says: "There are the strongest reasons for believing that our Lady was not the mother of any child except her Divine Son, and that those who are sometimes called the 'brethren of the Lord' were His kinsmen, 'not improbably His cousins according to the flesh.'" This, says the *Christian World*, is "backing up a weak case with a purely imaginative hypothesis which contradicts the plain words of Scripture and violates all probability. The Canon complains that in the Church of England, in order to make a Catholic Prayer-Book conform to Protestant or lax opinion, 'Principles have been strained to snapping and words used in unreal meanings.' He should be an expert in this process."

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Binding the multiplication table with the Church Catechism is an odd arrangement. But this is what the author of *A Tour in the Harz* found to be the case with some children's school-books that he came across in Klansthal. He naively remarks that it is not easy to reconcile the multiplication table with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and "children are thus, from the earliest years, liable to be led into mortal doubt. In Prussia we are much wiser, and, with all our zeal to convert our mathematical Freethinkers, we are careful not to print the multiplication table on the back of the Catechism."

At a High School in the North of London a pupil handed in an essay containing the following remarkable announcement: "And Joash, the king, fell on Eliza's neck and wept."

Some highly amusing answers from American examination papers have been published by a Transatlantic monthly. Here are some good samples of the unconscious humor of the schoolboy:—"What was the religion of the Ancient Britons?"—"A strange and terrible one—that of the Dudes." "For what is John Milton famous?"—"Keeping bad angels out of heaven." "Name some of the early Christian Fathers."—"Jerome, Oxigen, and Ambrosia."

Printers' errors are confined to no part of the world. A Colonial paper had in its announcements that one of the most popular ministers would preach on "The Mania in the Desert," and that another would take for his subject, "An Altar to an Unknown Girl."

A Rochdale correspondent sends me, says a writer in the *Sunday Chronicle*, two lottery tickets issued in connection with the Littleborough Parish Church Schools Bazaar. One is a penny ticket, giving a chance to obtain a brass curb fender and "suite complete"; another is a threepenny ticket for a "handsome full-sized bedspread." He wants to know what is the difference between this form of gaming and that in coupon competitions now declared illegal. There is no difference at all, save that one is associated with the Church, and is therefore so respectable that the police do not interfere, and even the Anti-Gambling League is rendered blind; and the other is associated with sport, which, as you all know, is in the eyes of the elect the depth of wickedness. That which is a sin on this side the street is a perfectly pious act in the church across the way.

Dorsetshire has not the only parish church in which a congregation of one person only has attended the service. At a church in Deal, where choral evensong is sung on Wednesdays, on one evening the parson, verger, organ-blower, and organist were the only officials in their places, and the reverend gentleman went through the whole of the service and preached a sermon to a congregation consisting of one lady.

We referred the other day to a Church of England benefice that was going a-begging, on account of its poverty and general undesirableness. It is a very different case, however, with the rectory of St. Peter's, Cornhill, London, which is worth a good round sum annually, running up into three figures. This living is in the gift of the Corporation, and we hear the Guildhall has been besieged with applicants.

St. Andrew's Church, Bordesley, Birmingham, had to come down, as it was a tottering structure and a menace to the public in the street. But it seems to be a matter of great difficulty to raise the money for the new edifice. About £6,000 is still wanted, and does not appear to be forthcoming. "Revive thy work, O Lord," was the hymn chosen for the induction service. It was a most pathetic and pointed appeal to the Almighty, and we are wondering if he will give the "work" a lift.

The *Beverley Guardian* continues to print correspondence on "Religion and Infidelity." The orthodox representatives do not err on the side of modesty. Canon Nolloth insinuates that Darwin was a Christian, in spite of Darwin's own express disclaimer; and an anonymous writer, signing himself "Student," claims that the Ten Commandments are "written on the heart and mind of every human being born into this world." Of course the ethical part of the Ten Commandments is as old as human society, and myriads of years older than the Christian or the Jewish religion. But the ecclesiastical part is strictly limited to Jews, as far as the first commandment is concerned, and to Protestants, as regards the fourth.

Solomon's decision in the matter of the baby with two mothers was repeated by an American judge the other day in Georgia. He called for a big butcher's knife, and declared that he was going to divide the six-months-old bantling in halves. Whereupon both ladies exclaimed, "Don't do that: keep it yourself." They hurried out of court, and left the judge with the baby on his hands!

The clerical party in the Hungarian Chamber of Deputies have censured the Government for allowing "immoral" books to be used in the public schools. Amongst these objectionable volumes is Shakespeare's *King John*. We suppose the "immorality" consists in the King's speeches against priestcraft.

A number of lads were charged at the Highgate Police-court with breaking into the Manor Park Mission Hall. The superintendent of the soul-saving establishment, who is also a commercial traveller, recognised all of them as more or less regular attendants, but did not seem to see that this was any reflection on his doctrines or his preaching.

"May God rest his soul." That is what Policeman Thompson's alleged murderer is reported to have said to Inspector Divall. There is not much "infidelity" in the observation, anyhow.

A *Daily News* reviewer calls attention to the fact that "the severance between morality and religion" is not confined to the Mohammedan world. Mecca and Medina are foully immoral cities, but "the Rome of the Popes never has been a model of the Christian virtues." There is no need, however, to go as far as Rome for an illustration. It is notorious in England that cathedral cities show the most drunkenness and prostitution to the square yard. They come out an easy first in any fair and open competition.

General Gordon once asked the present Archbishop of Canterbury whether it would be possible to allow polygamy amongst the native Christians in Africa. "If," said Gordon, "we could only let them have four wives each, I verily believe that in half a century you could make the whole of Africa Christian." Dr. Temple replied with a peremptory "No," and he now says that Christian converts in the Dark Continent must "acknowledge the laws which Our Lord has imposed upon us in this teaching." This is all very fine; but where does Dr. Temple find any "law" against polygamy in the teaching of Jesus Christ? We have been unable to discover a single word against it in the Gospels—or, for that matter, in the whole of the New Testament. The Archbishop of Canterbury ought to know, and probably *does* know, that Europe has inherited monogamy from the civilisation of Greece and Rome.

After the School Board fight at Birmingham came the licensing struggle, in which the Temperance party secured the refusal of a drink license to two theatres. This will not lead to less drinking, but rather to more. People will simply leave the theatre between the acts, and get what they want in the liquid line at the nearest public-houses; and, instead of taking one glass, will often take two—one for thirst and one to go on with. They will also bring in drink in bottles. And the last state of those theatre-goers will be worse than the first.

The *Christian World* publishes two articles by the Rev. F. C. Spun, dealing with Revivals and Conversions. He observes that the great Simultaneous Mission contemplated by the Dissenting Churches early in the new year will be either a "magnificent success" or a "great disaster." For the coming campaign, he says, they "want science." Perhaps so, but does science want them? Mr. Spun admits that "the secular spirit has penetrated the life of England so thoroughly that average people simply refuse to give themselves a chance of thinking about 'higher' things," and that "vast numbers of people will not come to church unless there is in the service an element of sensationalism." Again, he admits that "the notion of God, of the soul, of immortality and of spirituality, have *no real grip* upon the majority of the people." Even the Church is "largely secularised." Mr. Spun is also sceptical regarding "conversions." "We read again and again," he says, "that so many people entered the enquiry room," but he adds, "I should like a report to be given *six months afterwards*." We have said the same sort of thing ourselves many a time and oft, and we are glad to see it is being forced upon the recognition of the more knowing men of God. On the whole, it is pretty evident that Christianity is a losing cause. Nothing short of a miracle can save it. And the age of miracles is past.

The new vicar or Brixham, the Rev. Perry Circuitt, went into the Baker's-hill Girls' and Infants' School, demanded the log book, and made entries therein. This was against the Code, and a mere piece of clerical impertinence. The School Board passed a resolution strongly disapproving of his conduct.

George Macdonald, the humorous contributor of "Observations" in the New York *Truthseeker*, does not like the way some people have of setting themselves up as the "Ingersoll" of this or that part of the United States. "I myself," he concludes, "have done that which must endure and be conned by generations to come as long as Ingersoll's writings occupy the libraries of the world. It is the index to his works."

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 16, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "The Blood of Christ: A Study in Savage Salvation."

December 23 and 30, Athenæum Hall.

January 6, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—December 16, Camberwell; 17, Temperance Hall, Blackfriars-road; 23, Camberwell. January 20, Sheffield; 27, Leicester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

F. W. LLOYD.—See "Sugar Plums."

H. SILVERSTEIN.—We recollect the meeting quite well.

F. J. VOISEY.—Much pleased to hear from you.

S. HOLMAN.—See paragraph. We should like to see a good, strong Freethought organisation in South Wales.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Per Miss Vance: J. Greeves Fisher, 7s. 6d.; G. Calcutt, 1s.

A. J. H.—We should prefer to see the volume first. "Book Chat" will be resumed shortly as a regular feature of the *Freethinker*. Thanks for the trouble you have taken.

M. M. R.—Must still hold over. Fortunately, it will keep. We want to deal with it adequately. Meanwhile, pray accept our best thanks.

H. D. B.—Thanks for the cutting. See paragraph. *Darwin on God* has been sent you. That little volume should be kept at hand by every Freethinker for reference. It contains all that relates to religion in Darwin's works and in his Life and Letters. Mr. Foote took a great deal of pains to bring the material together.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings. We are not in the least surprised at the exclusion of your letter by the Birmingham press. The editors can't afford to upset their Church and Chapel readers.

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always very welcome.

ALERT.—We are obliged. See "Acid Drops."

OWING to the Christmas holidays, the *Freethinker* for Sunday, December 30, will have to be published on Monday, December 24. It will be necessary, therefore, for all Lecture Notices for that number to reach us not later than the first post on Saturday, December 22. Branch secretaries and other persons concerned are requested to note this and prepare to be in good time.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges: Mrs. B. E. Marks, 5s.

R. CHAPMAN.—See "Acid Drops" and "Sugar Plums." Thanks for cutting.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Bristol Times—Secular Thought—Glasgow Herald—Freidenker—Boston Investigator—Torch of Reason—Two Worlds—Birmingham Gazette—M. A. P.—Anglo-Russian—Home Magazine—Leicester Guardian—Doncaster Gazette—Crescent—Ethical World—Liberator—Sheerness Guardian—Truthseeker (New York).

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing him against copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

I.—SHILLING WEEK.

IT will be remembered that the first seven days in October were fixed upon as "Shilling Week." During that period the readers of the *Freethinker*—or those of them who were not placing their names in the official list of special subscribers to the Twentieth Century Fund—were invited to send me one or more shillings, which I promised to acknowledge from week to week as I received them. This "Shilling Week," as on previous occasions, ran into "Shilling Month." So many people fail to hurry up with voluntary subscriptions; and so many, too, wait to see what others are doing before giving anything themselves. Moreover, there are always some desperate laggards in every considerable collection of human beings; ladies and gentlemen who, as the proverbial saying goes, will be too late for the resurrection. Still, everything ends, even "Shilling Week." With a final dribble, as late as December, this subscription closed; and I intended to say something about it immediately, but I was prevented from doing so just then by the other imperative calls upon my time and energy. Subsequently, for a week or two, there was no room in the *Freethinker* for my observations on the subject. But this week I have *made* room, as I want the matter done with before Christmas.

This October "Shilling Week" was designed in order to let the "rank and file" of the Freethought party have an opportunity of contributing, if only the smallest sums, to the Twentieth Century Fund. They were invited to do so in the strongest language at my command. Those who responded to the appeal are now asked to receive my thanks—on behalf of the movement. Those who did not respond—and their name is legion—are earnestly asked to think the matter over again, with a view to showing that they have some real, substantial interest in the progress of Freethought, when the next opportunity is offered them, as it will be early in the new year, which is also early in the new century.

It must be confessed that the first "Shilling Week" was rather a disappointment. The list ought to have been three or four times as long. Here is a catalogue of the weekly acknowledgments in the *Freethinker* from beginning to end:—

SHILLING WEEK.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS IN THE "FREETHINKER."

Oct. 7	...	...	...	...	...	7	0	6
„ 14	...	...	...	...	...	24	17	0
„ 21	...	...	...	...	...	6	13	6
„ 28	...	...	...	...	...	6	18	0
Nov. 4	...	...	...	...	...	5	16	11
„ 11	...	...	...	...	...	1	2	6
„ 18	...	...	...	...	...	0	7	0
„ 25	...	...	...	...	...	0	12	0
Dec. 2	...	...	...	...	...	0	2	0
						£53	9	5

This total of £53 odd is so small that I can only conclude that a good many readers are holding back for the second "Shilling Week," which was announced to take place the first week in January. Their opportunity will be then or never, and I hope they will not let it slip by them into "the irrecoverable past."

Many, if not most, of those who gave something in October will give something more in January. It is generally those who give once that give again. That is because they are sincere and earnest friends of the movement. Perhaps I may add in this connection that

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those who "shell out" from time to time are also the most generous and considerate in other respects. It is seldom the subscribers who raise objections and cause bothers. The man who *gives* is generally satisfied that the best has been done with his money. It is the man who does *not* give who is so anxious to know what has been done with the other man's subscription.

Next week I shall print the remainder of my observations on this important subject. I shall also print a full list, right up to date, of all the special subscribers to the Twentieth Century Fund, with a mark against those who have redeemed their promises. This will occupy a fair amount of space, which I cannot spare at present. In the meantime, I invite all who have not already *paid* their subscriptions to do so if possible by Tuesday morning, December 18.

Freethinkers who may be a little downhearted over the small success of the first "Shilling Week" may console themselves at once by reflecting, as they will *see* next week, that far greater success has been realised in respect to the special side of the Twentieth Century Fund. Readers will perhaps have noticed that, concurrently with the "Shilling Week" acknowledgments, there have been other acknowledgments of a more gratifying character.

When I first proposed the idea of this Twentieth Century Fund I suggested that there ought to be no difficulty in raising £1,000. In spite of a partial discouragement, I still intend to make a strong effort to approach, if not to reach, that figure. One never knows what is in reserve.

G. W. Foote.

Sugar Plums.

Some readers of the *Freethinker* may not have been able to obtain a copy of our last week's issue. We ran short on Saturday, and had to refuse some orders. There are always returns, however, and back numbers can generally be obtained.

Mr. Foote had a capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, and his lecture on "Christian Charity in China" was followed with close attention and appreciation. Mr. Foote occupies the same platform again this evening (Dec. 16), taking for his subject "The Blood of Christ: A Study in Savage Salvation." Some people will think the title a strong one, but the language is Scriptural as far as the "Blood" is concerned, and the doctrine is the vital essence of orthodox Christianity.

The Mother of God is the title of a new little work by Mr. G. W. Foote. It consists of the articles (revised) which appeared in the *Freethinker* a year ago, and which he was urged to reprint—together with a large amount of fresh matter. The *brochure* will be on sale next week.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured last Sunday evening at the Public Baths, Battersea. There was a much larger audience than on the previous Sunday. The lecture was well received and heartily applauded. Mr. Schaller presided, and made an earnest appeal for opposition, but none was forthcoming. Mr. C. Cohen lectures at the same place this evening, Sunday, December 16.

Mr. Charles Watts has reprinted in pamphlet form his articles that have recently appeared in our columns on Spiritualism, with a lengthy addendum on "Some Criticisms Answered." The title of the pamphlet is *Spiritualism a Delusion;* the price is threepence, and it is on sale at our publishing office. It is carefully written, and should have a good circulation.

Under the Concentration Scheme the Camberwell Secular Hall will be utilised, by arrangement with the local N.S.S. Branch, for three Sunday evening lectures, beginning with this evening (Dec. 16), when Mr. Charles Watts will lecture. He will also lecture on the following Sunday, and will be succeeded by Mr. C. Cohen. The admission to these meetings is by the customary charge at the door.

Mr. Cohen opened the course of four lectures in the Temperance Hall, Blackfriars-road, on Monday evening. There was a moderate attendance, which will doubtless be improved upon as the experiment gets better known in the neighborhood. Mr. Watts delivers the second lecture of this course on Monday evening next (Dec. 17).

Mr. A. B. Moss finished the course of free lectures at Wellington Hall, Islington, on Monday evening. His lecture was well appreciated, and was followed by a lengthy discussion.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectured on "Shakespeare," with dramatic recitals, at the Secular Hall, New Brompton, on Sunday evening, and was received with great favor by a large and appreciative audience.

Mr. W. Heaford wound up the course of lectures at the Aldgate Public Baths on Sunday evening. He had a fair audience and a lengthy discussion. We understand that the East London friends are looking for a hall in the Poplar district.

Secular Thought (Toronto), which we are always glad to receive, continues to reach us fitfully. Four numbers have just arrived together. One of them reproduces our article on "The C.I.V.'s at St. Paul's," another a poem by Ess Jay Bee—who, by the way, is no "Jay"—and a third an article by "Mimnermus." The *Freethinker* staff will be pleased to know they have readers in Canada.

Mr. F. J. Gould won a brilliant victory as the Secular Moral Education candidate at the Leicester School Board election. It was an indisputable triumph to come out second on the poll. Fortunately, Mr. Gould is thoroughly conversant with School Board work, and he is certain to make an extremely useful member.

The *Leicester Guardian* prints a portrait and a sympathetic notice of Mr. F. J. Gould. "We have seen enough of Mr. Gould," the editor says, "to make us believe that he will make an able and useful member of the School Board. Those who know him best express the highest admiration for his ability, tact, and moderation. These are all qualities needed on public bodies, and they promise well for Mr. Gould's future as a public man in Leicester."

The Church and Chapel parties are equally divided on the Leicester School Board. Both can say "We are seven." Mr. Gould is the fifteenth member—*second* on the poll, though—and holds the balance between them.

The *Birmingham Gazette* is an orthodox organ in religious matters. All the more valuable, therefore, is its admission in a book-review that "Few men of perception will deny that the foundations of faith have been shaken, and that a latent Agnosticism exists in the minds of many who, nevertheless, attend church regularly, and repress every outward and visible sign of the change that has come over them."

Mr. H. Percy Ward's election committee at Birmingham are making an earnest appeal for subscriptions to clear off the balance of the expenses of his "Secular Education" candidature. They rightly point out that, although Mr. Ward did not win a seat, he scored in many ways a very distinct success; and they feel that they have a good ground for inviting outside support. The total expenditure was only £21 19s. 1d. Of this £9 13s. 3d. has been subscribed, and the deficit is £12 5s. 10d. Contributions should be forwarded to Mr. J. Partridge, 65 Cato-street, Birmingham.

The Birmingham Branch has sent us a statement of the local income and expenditure in connection with the Freethought Demonstration held in the Town Hall on Sunday, October 21. The collection at Mr. Foote's lecture in the afternoon realised £5 0s. 9d., and the collection at the Demonstration in the evening £7 4s. 9d. The total of expenses, including incidental hall charges, organist, printing, posting, and other advertising, was £12 10s. 8d. The deficit is therefore only 5s. 2d. It was the afternoon lecture that saved the Branch from a more serious loss. The expense of the speakers was borne by the Central Fund.

Mr. James Neate, a vice-president of the N.S.S., and a hard and constant worker for the Freethought cause in East London, writes to us as follows: "On Friday last I was summoned on a coroner's inquest before Mr. Wynn Westcott, and when the coroner told the constable to swear in the jury I made my protest according to the instructions drawn up by our late leader, Charles Bradlaugh. In a very pleasant manner the coroner allowed me to make affirmation; but some of the jury seemed surprised, and the constable looked amazed. I noticed that all the doctors and the police kissed the open Bible, while the jury and other witnesses had to kiss the dirty covers, which were probably defiled by tobacco juice and sore lips. I hope all Freethinkers make a point of affirming. They should do so if only in honor of the man

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who carried the Oaths Act. This is the third time I have affirmed before this coroner, and only once have I found a fellow claimant, who was president of the local Co-operative Society."

The *Sheerness Times* gave a good report of the funeral of the late Mr. A. W. Marks, whose death was recorded in last week's *Freethinker*. A Secular Burial Service—from which our contemporary printed a long extract—was read by Mr. H. Barber, a friend of the deceased, who has succeeded him as Secretary to the Gas Company. A large number of townspeople went to the cemetery to pay a last tribute of respect to the dead. Wreaths were sent by the Gas Company Directors, by the Liberal Association, and by the Women's Liberal Association.

Mr. Treharne-Jones's lecture at Pontypridd was highly appreciated by the audience. The local Freethinkers show a desire for a better organisation, to which end a meeting has been called for Sunday evening (Dec. 16) at 6 o'clock at the City Restaurant, Pontypridd. Freethinkers in the district are earnestly invited to attend.

Mr. Henry Spence, a member of the West Ham N. S. S. Branch, writing from 11 Reginald-road, Forest-gate, E., says that he is superintendent, secretary, and treasurer of the Sunday-school at Libra Hall, which was started nine years ago by Mr. F. J. Gould. It is still flourishing, and has over seventy scholars. Their usual Christmas treat is approaching. "May I appeal to your readers," Mr. Spence asks, "for a few shillings to carry on the good work?"

Mr. James Hales is a candidate in the Portsmouth School Board elections. He is in favor of relegating religious instruction to the Sunday-schools, which he calls "its proper place." We hope he will be strongly supported by the Freethinkers. He polled nearly 6,000 votes before, and 7,000 will carry him in. Freethinkers ought to be able to make up that extra thousand.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the National Secular Society, will take place on Monday evening, January 14, at the Holborn Restaurant. Mr. G. W. Foote will preside, and will be supported by several leading Secularists. The tickets are, as usual, four shillings each, and can be obtained from Miss Vance, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, as well as from London Branch secretaries. Some innovations are to be made at this first dinner in the New Century, which, it is believed, will add to the enjoyment of the company.

Liverpool friends should note that Mr. H. Percy Ward, of Birmingham, is lecturing in their city to-day (Dec. 16). He speaks three times in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

THE doctrine of the Trinity is usually ascribed to Egyptian influence, chiefly because it seems to have been specially championed by the theologians of Alexandria. The parallels brought forward from Egyptian mythology, however, are extremely vague and unconvincing, and it is very doubtful if they have much bearing on the question. Within the past few years another large body of literature has become accessible to the learned world—namely, the Babylonian literature; and it will be interesting to consider whether the Babylonians can offer anything in elucidation of the problem.

First of all, however, we must consider the origin of the idea of the Trinity; or, rather, the association of the Three Persons of the Godhead. In the earliest Christian writings Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are cited with all the solemnity of a known religious formula, as in 2 Corinthians xiii. 14 and Matthew xxviii. 19. The Third Person of the Trinity is unknown to the Old Testament, but appears, fully developed, in the New. He is introduced as a known conception, and not a word of explanation is vouchsafed about him. In the Gospel of St. John this Person has a special name—the "Paraclete" (John xiv. 26) or "Advocate," which the Authorised Version curiously renders "Comforter," in imitation of Martin Luther; although, as the margin of the Revised Version indicates, that is not the meaning of the word; and if *Parakletos* is translated "Advocate" in 1 John ii. 1, it should certainly have the same rendering in John xiv. 26. However, apart from all philological considerations, we have to bear in mind that the Holy Ghost is assumed, throughout the New Testament, to be familiar to the reader; so that we must take it that it was a known conception, and not an innovation of doctrine. In consequence of these facts it has often been argued that the doctrine of the Trinity must be pre-Christian, and have been taken over bodily by the New Testament writers. The problem is, therefore, Who was it taken from?—for it is difficult to conceive that the doctrine was the product of Jewish speculation.

Until comparatively recently we had no certain knowledge of the religious ideas of the Babylonians; but the discovery of thousands of Babylonian tablets within the last fifty years has enabled us to gain an insight into these ideas as welcome as it was unexpected. The Babylonians had the same crowd of gods in their Pantheon that we find in the theology of other ancient peoples. But the deity who most concerns us is Ea, the God of the Sea. In calling him the God of the Sea the reader must not run away with the idea that he was a mere Babylonian Neptune. For the "Sea" meant much more to his worshippers. In the Babylonian Cosmogony the world is conceived as a flat disk, floating upon the bosom of the primeval ocean, and separated by the firmament from the upper ocean which occasionally pours down its waters in rains and storms. Over all these waters Ea reigned supreme, and all wisdom was supposed to be derived from him. But Ea himself was far too august to be approached by mere mortals; hence his son Merodach was conceived as the mediator. Merodach was the patron god of the City of Babylon. It was Merodach that had overthrown chaos and created the world, and it was Merodach who watched over his creatures and preserved them from every ill. He was hailed as the benefactor and savior of mankind, and the lord of heaven and earth. So great was the enthusiasm for Merodach that some of his worshippers practically denied the existence of any other deity, and Mr. Theo. G. Pinches has described at the Victoria Institute a theological tablet now in the British Museum in which all the gods of the Babylonian Pantheon are asserted to be mere manifestations of Merodach.

Therefore, the two most prominent personages in the Babylonian Pantheon are Ea, the Father, and Merodach, the Son; and we find these two acting together in a most noteworthy fashion.

Merodach was mostly invoked for the cure of diseases. The doctrine of demoniac agency was fully developed among the Babylonians; all misfortunes, all accidents, all diseases, were ascribed to the direct action of evil spirits. All these ills were caused by the agency of a demon who had taken up his abode in the sufferer. In fact, the Babylonians held precisely the same idea upon the subject as the New Testament writers. Thus Matthew considers that dumbness is the work of a devil; and when the devil is cast out the dumb speaks. Casting out demons cures epileptic fits, insanity, fevers, and all the ills that flesh is heir to.

When, therefore, a Babylonian found himself under the influence of misfortune or disease he sought divine help. He repaired to the temple, and confided his troubles to a priest, who looked up the proper formula in the temple library, and proceeded to work a cure. Within the last few years these formulas of exorcism have received considerable attention from European savants. Professor Lenormant led the way, but his studies are now antiquated, being superseded by the work of younger scholars. In these tablets the course of events is usually as follows:—The possessed man and his priest present themselves before Merodach, and draw his attention to the case. Merodach then retires to his father Ea, describing the sufferings of the patient, the recital ending in this fashion:—

> "I know not, O Father, how this man can be restored."
> Then Ea answered to his son Merodach:
> "My Son, what is it that thou dost not know?
> What can I tell thee more?
> What I know, thou knowest also—
> Get thee gone, my son Merodach [and thus and thus shalt thou do to enable this man to be restored].

Merodach then receives specific instructions from his father as to the healing of the sick man by casting out the particular evil spirit that possesses him. In tablet after tablet we find Merodach acting as intercessor in this manner, and appealing to the wisdom of his father Ea for the benefit of mankind. The worshipper invoked

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Merodach with the greater confidence because the Son was co-equal with the Father. The line just quoted, "What I know, thou knowest also," has quite a Johannine ring about it (compare John x. 15), for it is very remarkable how all religions move along parallel lines, and often reproduce one another's formulæ.

But, in addition to this association of father and son, we frequently find a third deity—namely, Gibil, the Fire-God, whose co-operation is quite as important. Thus, in an incantation quoted by Dr. Zimmern for the relief of a person possessed by the "Seven Devils" (a community much feared in the Babylonian superstition), the conclusion is as follows :—

> Get thee gone, my son Merodach;
> Take thou the dish of Ea which drives away
> the demons;
> Beneath it kindle holy fire, the sacred exorcism
> of Eridu.
> Put fire above and below, that the Seven may
> not come nigh the patient.
> Let it glow at his head by night and by day.
> O Gibil, stand beside him at the midnight hour:
> Scare away the Seven, and scatter them afar.

In this incantation it will be observed that the sacred fire is supposed to ensure the attendance of Gibil, the God of Fire, who stands beside the patient and scares away the devils. Gibil was especially invoked for protection against sorcery, witchcraft, and evil spells. K. Tallqvist's *Maqlu* series contains the following exorcisms against sorcerers :—

> Your sorceries, with which ye have bewitched me,
> May Ea, the exorcist, dissolve.
> Your witchcrafts shall be torn asunder
> By Merodach, the divine exorcist, son of Ea, the judge.
> I bind ye, fetter ye, deliver ye over
> To the Fire-God, the burner, the singer, the binder,
> Who overthrows the sorcerers.
>
> For the loosening of the witchcraft, and the spell which is upon me,
> I fly to the hands of Ea, Merodach, and the Fire-God.

In the Babylonian religion, therefore, we have a triad of divinities, of whom the two first—Ea and Merodach—stand to one another in the relation of Father and Son; while the third, the Fire-God, carries out the commands of both, and acts as the intermediary between heaven and earth, and the purifier of mankind from devilry and witchcraft. In the New Testament, likewise, the Third Person of the Trinity stands in close relation to fire. "I, indeed, baptise you with water," says John the Baptist; "but he that cometh after me, he shall baptise you *with the Holy Ghost and with fire*" (Matthew iii. 11). "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, *like as of fire*, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the *Holy Ghost*" (Acts ii. 3, 4). Thus the parallel between the Babylonian triad and the Christian Trinity is close and startling. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that there must be some relation between them. The above extracts are derived from tablets of the Assyrian period, dating some six hundred years before the Christian era; but the Babylonian religion endured very much later, only dying out about the time of Constantine the Great. It is true that we know little or nothing of its later developments, as only a few scattered records have come down to us; so that its influence upon early Christian theology can only be surmised, and not categorically proved. Parseeism, Gnosticism, Judaism, Mendaism, and sundry other isms rose upon the ruins of the Babylonian faith; and it is only now that scholars are beginning to realise how much of these is to be traced back to the old theological speculations of Babylon and the curious superstitions of the Babylonians. CHILPERIC.

Echoes from Olympus.

IV.—Concerning Bathsheba's Ball.

THE great event of the Elysian season was Bathsheba's ball. Let there be no surprise at Bathsheba's presence in Paradise. That was all settled many centuries ago. David repented of his sin and was forgiven. Bathsheba made a most interesting penitent. When Jehovah saw her in all her surpassing beauty, suffused in tears for her offence, he forgave her at once. He knew then the strength of the temptation to which the "man after his own heart" had been subjected. David took all the blame on himself, which was the least he could do in the circumstances. The Lord approved of this magnanimity on the part of his favorite. He felt that he could hardly make fish of one and fall foul of the other. So he freely pardoned both, and decided that they should be taken into Abraham's bosom. Bathsheba demurely objected to this, remarking that she would prefer to remain in David's bosom. At which there was a hearty laugh in heaven—where fun is not too frequent.

"The only thing that disturbs me," said the Lord, "is what are we to do with Uriah the Hittite, her former husband."

"Oh," said David, "the poor chap might have sued me for damages and landed me in for costs, but he was prevented by the fact that he was dead. He was a gallant officer—a brave man. Make him Commander of the Heavenly Household Cavalry, with 2,000 shekels a year for pay."

"Yes," said the Lord, "that is the least we can do for him. But do you think he'll remain satisfied? He might cut up rough, you know."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed David, in his masterful way, "he is not the only husband who has lost his wife, and survived sufficiently long to feel glad that he had got rid of her."

"Well, well," remarked Jehovah, "if you are so certain about it, so it shall be. Uriah shall be Major-General of our Household Cavalry, with good pay, and a handsome pension when he retires. But, David, don't let's have any scandal in heaven in regard to you and Bathsheba. I've stretched a point."

"Go on, you don't mean it," remarked David with bluff *camaraderie*, "the gods have played too much havoc with the daughters of men to justify any pretence at prudery. As there is no giving or receiving in marriage in heaven, Bathsheba and I are going to live 'tally.'"

"Tally?" said the Omniscient; "what's 'tally'?"

"As if you didn't know? Well, let's go and have a 'magnum' together."

And they went, for David and the Lord were on very intimate terms.

Bathsheba's advent in heaven was the occasion of much jealousy. Jael wanted to drive a nail into her head at the first start off, but was prevented. It was represented to Jael that one performance of that kind was enough not only for a lifetime, but for eternity. Eve said she wasn't going to wash linen for a troll like that. And various other remarks of a similar kind were made by the envious female sex.

But Bathsheba lived it all down. She seemed to grow younger and more beautiful every day. It was said that she "painted." But that didn't prevent the male saints running after her. Young Joshua (he was only one hundred and ten when he died), arrayed in khaki, once attempted to lay hold of her in a dark corner of heaven. Being clawed for his pains, he apologised, and was pardoned on his representation that he was an "absent-minded" warrior. Many little notes were received by Bathsheba from aged, but still amorous, saints. Bathsheba pursued one settled course. She re-addressed them all to the senders' wives, and drove out each morning with the sweetest of smiles in her landau drawn by six cream-colored ponies.

Young Joshua, caring nothing for his rebuff, usually rode at her side as cavalier in attendance. His only, but sufficient, reward was a lift of her arched, jet-black eyebrows, and a covert glance from her flashing eyes.

Bathsheba—smiled on by the Court, and figuring in the most select of heavenly circles—had no difficulty in achieving the height of her ambition. She became the unchallengable leader of Elysian fashions. The ordinary female saints contemned her—and copied her. Leading photographers fought for the privilege of photographing her in all sorts of poses and in all kinds of costume.

The prophet Daniel, who had cultivated a pretty taste for painting, wished to depict her as David first saw her. Bathsheba was agreeable, but David came in unexpectedly and kicked over the bath and the easel, and Daniel went sorrowing away with a black eye. All the consolation he got was a remark from Moses that he must have been "off his bloomin' chump," and a threat from young Joshua that "he'd a good mind to bash his blighted head in."

But all this has nothing to do with Bathsheba's ball. How this great event came about we must hasten to relate. One bright morning in early spring Bathsheba and David were sitting at breakfast. Outside the open casement the brilliant-plumaged birds of Paradise sang and fluttered and twittered in the bright rays of the rising morning sun. Bathsheba crumbled little pieces of bread in her dainty fingers on the cloth, and looked from time to time at David on the other side of the table. David was a trifle glumpy this particular morning, having stayed rather late at the Old Angelic the previous night playing crib with Isaiah. David was bringing out a new edition of his Psalms, and had a piece of toast in one hand and sheets of MS. in the other.

"Davy, my dear," said Bathsheba in mellifluous accents.

David had another chaw at his toast, and took no notice.

"Davy, my dear," repeated Bathsheba, a little louder.

"Well, what is it?" he growled, without looking round.

"I'm thinking, Davy dear, of giving a ball."

"My God! what other extravagance are you contemplating? However, do as you like. There's nothing but bankruptcy in front of us." Then, in his desperation, David held up his toast for another read, and made a chaw at his MSS. Immediately afterwards he jumped up, and strode out of the room.

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Bathsheba, of course, was in no way disconcerted. What do *you* think? Who ever knew a woman disturbed by a trifle like that? A little latter Miriam, Jephthah's daughter, looked in, and together they fixed on a date, and began to issue the invitations.

"The old man," said Bathsheba, "is rather cross about the idea just now. But he'll cotton to it later on. I know him."

"You ought by this time," observed Miriam.

And, in perfect confidence as to David's pliability and ultimate approval, they perfected their arrangements.

"It's to be confined strictly to our own set," explained Bathsheba. "As I have my reputation at Court to consider, we cannot, on any account, ask any shady people to come. Eve is no class, neither is Jael, nor Tamar, nor Lot's wife. But we must invite Moses and Aaron, Abraham and Sarah, and Jacob with Rachel and Leah. And oh! we *must* have Queen Esther and that funny old uncle of hers, whom you can never think of except as sitting at a gate. And we must have little Ruth, though we have to put up with that pig, Boaz. Then there's Solomon and his seven hundred wives. That's a nice little tea-party in itself, isn't it? Quite a circus. We can't, of course, invite his three hundred concubines. I suppose we shall have to ask some of the prophets, though I don't like the idea. They are such a dirty, unshaven, unpresentable crew. I daresay some of them will come with their naked arms and legs sticking out of sacks, and with a heap of cinders on their heads. And if that wretched old Jeremiah comes, he'll put a damper on the whole affair with his 'Woe, woe, woe,' as if he were in charge of a team of horses. We shall have to strictly limit the invitations, that's sure."

"Is there any possibility," inquired Miriam, "of a certain August Personage looking in?"

"Ah, that's the very thing which is uppermost in my mind. If, Miriam, we could ensure that, I should be made. Then I could snap my fingers at all the spiteful, mean creatures who are so jealous of me. They could never get Him to attend any of *their* balls. I believe I can. Did you notice how he smiled at me when last we bowed before the Throne?"

"Yes," said Miriam, "when you were there with David."

"No, but I am sure it was intended for me. I'll get David to bring him along when the affair is in full fling."

David came home rather early at night, and not a little pleased at the fact that an eminent firm of celestial publishers had accepted his new edition of the Psalms. Bathsheba laid before him her plans for the ball. He was now inclined—and this shows the instability of men when the fair sex are concerned—to regard the project a little more graciously than in the morning.

Bathsheba, whose head was screwed on all right, speedily fixed him up.

"Davy," she said, "can't you write us a nice little dramatic piece to be performed in the course of the evening? You *can* do it, when you like."

"Yes, I could," he responded. "A mere unpretentious trifle, lasting, say, half an hour."

"The very thing. It would give such *éclat* to the whole affair."

"But we shall have to find the people to take the parts, and is there time enough for rehearsals?"

"Plenty of time," said Bathsheba, "and I have secured a splendid *chef* for supper—Abel. You know how his savory cooking was pleasant to the nostrils of the Lord. And Noah has offered to officiate as butler. But I *do* hope that he won't get drunk."

"Well, my dear," observed David, "you seem to have fixed it all right, and I must now set to work on the little dramatic piece. I have one on the stocks, as it were, which will come in very handy with a little alteration. I have called it *The Lily of Judah*."

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed Bathsheba, with rapture that seemed too natural to be feigned.

Thus the arrangements went on, and at last the eventful evening arrived. The *élite* of the Jewish section of heaven were present in the beautiful Palace which had been allotted by the Lord to the man after his own heart. The halls and corridors and conservatories and retiring-rooms were ablaze with dazzling light, reflected four-fold by the glittering gems which at every point adorned the marble pilasters, the frescoed walls, and the brightly-polished agate pavement and stairs. In the orchestral balcony, perched high in the central hall, a band under the direction of Herr Jacobinoff discoursed sweet music.

Bathsheba, attired in a silk costume resplendent with precious stones—flashing diamonds, sapphires, amethysts, rubies, and pearls—received her guests. David, in shining martial armor, moved about and greeted those of the male sex with whom he was more or less personally acquainted.

Bathsheba's ball was a pronounced success. Whatever might happen subsequently could never discount its splendid opening. David's dramatic production went off wonderfully well. It was written somewhat on conventional lines. Most of the leading visitors had parts assigned to them. The Lily of Judah (Ruth) was beloved by a young lieutenant (Absalom). She was coveted by the Lord of the Manor (Naboth), and a plot was in project to put Absalom to death. Then there came on the scene the good angel (Samuel) who defeated all the vile machinations. And in the happy ending the patriarchal blessing was bestowed on the loving couple by a pilgrim father (Moses). Curtain.

Much applause was bestowed on this dramatic trifle, and, in reply to cries for the author, David appeared and bowed his acknowledgments.

Then there was presented a little operetta by Aaron, entitled *The Enchanted Garden*, with a chorus and dance by houris. The chorus was very much in these words:—

> We're now at home
> In the realms of bliss,
> We needn't pose like that or this;
> Perhaps we sometimes do amiss,
> But they can't kick us out,
> Though we turn about,
> For we're now in the New Jer-o-salem.

By this time there was an exhilarating air throughout the marble halls of David's palace. Dancing started in the Central Hall, led off by David and Bathsheba. Many complimentary things were said about both, but the real dancing took place when young Joshua took out Bathsheba for a waltz.

David went into the hall where the theatrical stage was rigged up. All the ladies had left there for the fascination of the dance. "Now, boys," said David, "I'll show you how I danced before the Ark of the Lord." He immediately began to disrobe, but was providentially stopped by the entrance of Abraham and Moses. Then David said he would give his celebrated Nigger Entertainment. He went out, and came back as the White-Eyed Kaffir, with young Samuel made up as Dan Leno. Hardly had they begun their entertainment when, as if with a gust of wind and an electrical disturbance of the air, there walked in no other than the August Personage. A dead silence reigned.

David hurriedly tried to wipe the black from his face with his coat-tails, but failed. Then he darted to the side wings, and endeavored to find the door leading to the dark regions below the stage in which to hide himself. But he failed to escape, and eventually had to listen to a very stern remonstrance from the August Personage on his unseemly behavior. Afterwards he was not in too much of a good humor. He went into the hall where the dancing was proceeding, all the time inwardly raging at his own folly. The first view that presented itself to his vision was Joshua waltzing with Bathsheba. Then he whipped out his sword, and went for Joshua. The latter, who had espied him, was ready, and in less than two minutes each had sustained a wound. Bathsheba fell on the combatants in turn, and bathed them with her tears. The wounded were taken off, and at this point the guests discreetly thought it time to depart. Thus ended Bathsheba's ball. Is it not all written in the chronicles of heaven?

Francis Neale.

The National Secular Society.

Report of monthly Executive meeting held at the Society's offices on Thursday, December 6. Present: Mr. G. W. Foote (President), Messrs. E. Bater, W. Beech, C. Cohen, A. B. Moss, J. Cooper, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, H. J. Stace, B. Munton, J. Neate, E. Quay, C. Quinton, V. Roger, F. Schaller, T. Shore, T. Thurlow, G. J. Warren, and C. Watts. Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. Cash statement received and adopted.

The Secretary reported the sudden decease of Mr. S. Hartmann, and all present expressed their deep concern at the sad intelligence.

The Secretary was instructed to ascertain if arrangements could be made for the N. S. S. to be represented at his (Mr. Hartmann's) funeral, and the meeting unanimously resolved: "That a letter be sent to Miss Hartmann, expressing the N. S. S. Executive's sorrow at the death of its honorary treasurer, Mr. S. Hartmann, in whom the Freethought movement loses one of its most loyal and devoted workers, whose goodness of nature endeared him to all his colleagues."

A letter received from Mr. J. F. Haines, of the East London Branch, was read by the Secretary, who was instructed to write Mr. Haines to the effect that the matter of his letter was one to be dealt with by the Freethought Publishing Company.

The President mentioned the terrible difficulty in obtaining halls in London for Freethought lectures, particularly for Sunday meetings, and thought it desirable to arrange for a partial shifting of the scheme, and to take in such parts of the provinces as are doing active work. The following resolution was then moved by Mr. Moss, seconded by Mr. Warren, and carried unanimously: "That, considering the difficulty of obtaining halls in London, and the immense cost of them, this Executive authorises the shifting of the basis of the Concentration Scheme in part to the provinces."

Edith M. Vance, *Secretary*.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Blood of Christ: a Study in Savage Salvation."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Charles Watts, "Is Modern Spiritualism a Delusion?"

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, Harry Snell, "A Century's Progress in Science."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Herbert Burrows, "Marie Corelli's *Master Christian*."

WEST LONDON BRANCH (The Victory, Newnham-street, Queen-street, Edgware-road): December 20, at 9, Half-yearly meeting.

BATTERSEA BATHS (Latchmere-road, Battersea): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Use of Religion."

SOUTH METROPOLITAN TEMPERANCE HALL (Blackfriars'-road): December 17, at 8, "The Science of Life."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "Hindooism."

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall); 6 30, Mrs. A. M. Craig, "Man: From a Woman's Standpoint."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, Concert by Bohemian Choir—J. Matthews and others.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school,

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. Gilbert; 6.30, A lecture.

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Mr. Trumper, "A Peep into Sociology."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Marie Corelli's *Master Christian*."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward—11, "Thomas Paine and his *Age of Reason*"; 3, "Who Made the Devil?" 7, "Jesus Christ: God, Man, or Myth?"

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Stanley Jones, "The Roots of Christianity."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Extra Pleasant Musical Evening.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 6.30, Adjourned discussion on "Agnosticism and Atheism."

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 51. SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

Dr. Parker's Rushlight.

MODERN Christianity lives largely by sensationalism. That is at least half the secret of the success of the High Church party. Music, decorations, processions, and ornate ritual appeal to the sensuous nature. On the top of them there comes occasionally the "good thick stupefying incense smoke"—as Browning called it, and then the appeal is complete. The female worshipper is entirely overcome and ready for any religious folly; while the male worshipper feels as though he were in a kind of cross-place between a lady's scented chamber and a Chinese opium den. Even the Protestant sect at the other extreme follows a more vulgar edition of the same policy. General Booth has always known the value of glaring color, incessant movement, and blatant noise. Make the people feel, and give them no time to think, is ever the first point in his method. Nor is the leader of the rival show, the Church Army, at all backward in these trade devices. The Rev. Mr. Carlile preaches with limelight illustrations, and holds forth on any notorious topic of the week, even if pertaining to the general police news or the particular exploits of Jack the Ripper. And the same infection has pervaded the whole of the once solemn household of faith. Mr. Price Hughes goes in for a pious music-hall entertainment on Sunday afternoons in Piccadilly. Christian Endeavorers, and other *fin de siècle* bodies, hire public palaces with extensive grounds and camp out in tents. On all sides the old order changeth, giving place to new, and priestcraft fulfils itself in many ways—some of them quite shockingly shady.

Some time ago there was a peculiar bit of religious sensationalism in America. The Rev. C. M. Sheldon wrote a dull, trashy book called *In His Steps: or What would Jesus Do?* One feature of the story was the running of a big daily paper on Christ-like lines. Gambling news, drink and smoke advertisements, and other attractions and sources of revenue, were dropped; and the Sunday edition—got up and printed, by the way, on Saturday—was discontinued. Nothing was allowed to appear but what Jesus Christ would have passed if he occupied the editorial chair, with a halo on his head, and the twelve apostles sitting around him as a committee of first inspection. Of course there was a tremendous loss on the experiment; for, although God made the world, it is not ready for such a godly newspaper. But a rich Christian lady was at hand, with a quarter of million dollars that she hardly knew what to do with, and the Christ-like organ was sustained in the face of public indifference. Even as the story went the experiment was not alluring to investors. Nevertheless the proprietors of the *Topeka Capital* invited the reverend story-teller to take command of their paper for a week. Not longer, for he might kill it. For a week it would probably survive his manipulation, and during that period it would be splendidly advertised all over the United States. Mr. Sheldon, on the other hand, received about £1,000 for his Christ-like services. Both sides were thoroughly satisfied. The *Topeka Capital* still lives, and no doubt flourishes like a green bay tree, though it can hardly want another dose of Sheldon. One bottle of that mixture was enough for a single incarnation.

Our own enterprising and histrionic Dr. Parker has followed in the footsteps of Brother Sheldon, as Brother Sheldon followed in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. By an arrangement with the proprietors of the *Sun*—the funny name of a London evening paper—the famous Oracle of the City Temple has been conducting that sheet during the past week—from December 17 to December 23 inclusive. We dare say the arrangement was expected to be mutually profitable. Dr. Parker is not reputed to be fond of working for nothing—not even for Christ; and the *Sun* will benefit by the wide advertisement that must accrue from its odd experiment.

We bought a copy of the "second extra special" on Monday evening. The facetious-looking young man who sold it to us winked as he took our halfpenny. We fancy he knew our name was not Simpkins. Turning to the "Latest News" column our eyes fell upon some ancient texts, followed by an appeal to "all praying souls in London" to wrestle with the Lord, with a view to gambling being made to "perish out of the land." Our own reflection on this matter was that the Lord could stop gambling whenever he pleased, and that Dr. Parker's tip as to the psychological moment was not necessary to Omniscience.

Dr. Parker's idea was to give no gambling news, but a plentiful supply of war news. Is this, however, quite consistent with the teaching of the New Testament? We do not recollect any specific text in that volume against gambling, and there are texts which show that casting lots (or tossing for it, as we say now) was a common method of deciding hard questions. But fighting of all kinds, even in honest self-defence, is forbidden in the Sermon on the Mount. It seems to us, therefore, that Dr. Parker should have excluded all news from the front, as well as the latest odds.

We were amused to see Dr. Parker putting in a good word for "infidels." "Many so-called infidels," he said, "are really not infidels at all. There are more ecclesiastical infidels than religious infidels." On this principle, which is not too clear, Dr. Parker proceeded to explain that, wherever a man was trying to do a good deed, he should give religion the credit for it. "Many men," he condescendingly remarked, "are religious who do not know it." But how does Dr. Parker happen to know them better than they know themselves? If they ignore or repudiate his religion, it is idle on his part, and even impertinent, to claim them as belonging to his own faith. He would not claim a bad "infidel." Why, then, should he claim a good one?

"I delight," Dr. Parker said, "to lead the Devil a hard life"—and editing the *Sun* for a week is a part of that policy. But why should Dr. Parker be so severe on his Satanic Majesty? Instead of his giving the Devil work, some of us think the Devil gives *him* work. What would the men of God do without Old Nick? Is he not their best friend? They are all engaged in fighting him as the enemy of God—who is omnipotent! If he laid down his arms they would have to disband. Even if they only try to save us from sin, it is obvious that their business (and salaries) depends on the Devil's activity; for if he ceased to tempt us, God would have it all his own way, and there would be no one who was not righteous, no not one.

Dr. Parker's social philosophy is worthy of his religious belief. His remedy for Hooliganism is the whip and the cat; a pious imbecility which reminds us that all the great reformers in jurisprudence have been Freethinkers. "I should like," Dr. Parker says, "to have a constable standing in the shadow of every-street lamp to pounce upon guilty people, and to take them away to be flogged." "Try the 'cat,'" was his parting advice. This is Christian sociology after two thousand years of revelation!

G. W. FOOTE.

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The Church and the Dying Century.

Another century of the Christian era is drawing to a close, leaving behind a history of events pregnant with grounds for serious reflection. It has been a century of invention and discovery; of science and philosophy; of political expansion and social disquietude; of literary enterprise and educational improvement; and last, but not least, of indications of religious weakness and of undoubted proof of the progress and consolidation of Freethought. This is not the place to dwell upon all the above improvements, but to me, as a Secularist, it is of special interest to note that, in proportion to the progress of science and the increase of general knowledge, the practical influence of theology has declined. Further, it is obvious that, although during the last hundred years Christianity has had better opportunities than it ever had for proving what vitality for good it possessed, it is perfectly clear that the improvement which has been made within the time mentioned is in no way due to the Christian religion; on the contrary, the Church has been the foremost obstacle to the diffusion of scientific knowledge, the spread of general education, and the acquirement by the masses of their social rights. It can be fairly registered as an undeniable truth that the progress of the nineteenth century is the result of secular agencies rather than of religious teachings. This is most encouraging to Freethinkers, whose one desire is to establish freedom, justice, and honor among men, and thereby to secure and promote the highest welfare possible for the human family.

Let us see what the position of Christianity is at the close of the nineteenth century. Has it become more intelligible and more in harmony with human requirements? Has it become more practical as a factor in the regulation of daily conduct? Has it inspired the Church to proper action in the cause of justice and in the amelioration of the evil condition of the community? The answer is no, for we find that the teachings of the New Testament are entirely ignored; that the Christian's God is entirely forsaken; that the Bible as an infallible guide is given up; that Christ is looked upon more as an "Ideal" than as a practical reformer; that heaven and hell are regarded as *conditions* in this life, not *places* in some other existence; that the devil is admitted to be a non-entity; that the blood of the Lamb has lost its cleansing power; and, finally, that the best sermons preached from the pulpits to-day are based upon the ethics borrowed from ancient philosophers, not upon doctrines which once formed the very essence of Christianity. People have become more than ever indifferent to practical Christianity. So palpable is this fact that Bishop Ryle, in opening his Diocesan Conference in Liverpool, alluded to what he termed

> "one very unhealthy and painful symptom which seems to me to characterise the age in which we are living. The symptom I refer to is the increasing indifference to all distinctive doctrines and opinions in religion in every part of the land. I say emphatically *increasing religious indifference*.....I have not in view those huge masses of people in London, and our large towns, who worship nowhere, and appear to have no religion at all. I refer to those myriads in this age who are to be found in all our churches, who are not communicants, and never exhibit any interest in vital religion.....I declare my belief that the size and rapid growth of the school of indifference is one of the most dangerous signs of the times at the close of the nineteenth century. The multitude who belong to this school are not open opponents of the faith and Christ's cause; but they simply sit still and do nothing for religion at home or abroad. Ask any good clergyman who works his parish, and visits his people, and knows their characters, what is the chief difficulty he has to contend with. I am certain he would tell you that it is neither Romanism, nor extreme Ritualism, nor Erastianism, nor Broad Churchism, nor systematic Scepticism, nor any other 'ism,' but a half-dead torpid indifference about any sort or kind of religion."

Thus we see the change which has come over the reception of the Christian faith. The difference between its influence past and present may be seen when we remember that once truth was tested by Christianity, now Christianity is tested by truth; once reason bowed to faith, now faith has to bow to reason; once Christianity was a living principle, now it is practically impotent.

Taking our so-called National Church, which is supposed to be the expounder of the "genuine article" in religion, for the reason that it bears the Government stamp upon it, what is its position at the end of the present century? So far as religion and thought are concerned, this Church is most incongruously and anomalously placed. She is like a man between two stools, clinging to a bending plank overhead. Such a very unreliable support for the Church, the only guarantee for its position, is the State. Let this plank give way—and it must give way ere long—and the Church of England will lapse into chaotic confusion. Her inconsistency is thus manifest. Here we have a Church professedly based on a Divine faith; yet it has to rely for support upon the protection of the State. Were its assumed divinity a reality, secular aid for its existence should be unnecessary. Besides, the functions of the two—the Church and the State—are very different: the one claims the right of spiritual direction; the business of the other is to concern itself with the secular affairs of society. The Anglican Church is, moreover, equivocally placed with respect to her doctrines. She half receives the Reformation dogma of private interpretation of the Scriptures, and half rejects it by affirming that the true sense of Scripture is its interpretation by the Church. She thus professes to bow to reason, while, in fact, she denies its right. It has been said: "Ye cannot serve two masters: ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Alas for this dictum, however, the Church of England has ever been more remarkable for her solicitude to possess riches than for her "spiritual" devotion or regard for consistency! The assumption that the English Church is the national exponent of the religious thought of the age is entirely unsupported by facts. The union of the Church with the State is the main ground upon which the assertion is made. But only a slight reflection is necessary to demonstrate that such a connection cannot make the Church national, using that term in its proper sense. Before it can consistently deserve that designation, it must be shown that the Establishment represents the religious ideas and aspirations of the majority of the people of the United Kingdom. Such, however, is not the case, inasmuch as the bulk of the Protestants of Great Britain do not subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, and will not be bound by the priestly dogmas of the Established Church. The religious faith of Christendom outside the domain of Roman Catholicism day by day grows broader and less inclined to be fettered by the creeds and ecclesiastical teachings of priests and councils.

As Freethinkers, we need not be apprehensive either of Conformity or Nonconformity. The latter is now more political than religious, and the former is more religious than political in spirit; but its connection with the State—which is now tolerant perforce—deprives it of much of its original power to wound. It will be a glorious time when man shall be sufficiently free to cast off the swathing-bands of fetichism and ecclesiasticism, and shall have learned to rely solely upon human effort, and upon his own knowledge of his necessities and potentialities. There is no doubt that the next century will witness a vast improvement in the public mind on theological questions. For, the principle of free inquiry once given to the world, and once admitted by mankind, it would be absurd for any new "minister" to attempt to forge fresh intellectual shackles, or to say to the human mind, "Thus far shalt thou come, but no further!"

It is useless to attempt to disguise the fact that the principal consideration with those who desire to secure a Church living is not the "spiritual" welfare of the people, but whether a particular living possesses such attractions as a good fishing stream, a pleasant riding course, and a congregation composed of persons who are free from Scepticism, being contented to open their mouths and shut their eyes, and accept with implicit faith what their pastors tell them. Of course, it would be unfair to place all the clergy of the Church of England under this category. In this order, as among all bodies of men, are to be found those whose lives are strictly pure, earnest, and useful. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that throughout the rural districts the clergy are not remarkable for displaying that mental activity so desirable in those who essay to guide the conduct of others.

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Moreover, the Church is not only surrounded by impure conditions, but it is equally clear that it has failed as a reforming agency. At one period, for instance, the Church had every opportunity of proving its power and intention in the field of education. With vast wealth and influence it had for a long period the direction of the youthful mind. How did this religious institution use its advantages? Simply by thrusting its theological doctrines upon the people, rather than teaching them the practical duties of life. So palpable was the failure of the Church as an educational medium that the State was at length compelled to intervene, and to do what the Church had failed to accomplish. Unable to achieve the work themselves, the members of this wealthiest of all religious establishments became the most determined opponents of those who were able and willing to promote the secular education of the people. From the time when Lord Brougham pleaded for a national scheme of education to the present, when bigotry manifests itself on the Board schools, it can be truly said that the policy of the Church has been to thwart all instruction not in accordance with its own narrow creeds and dogmas. The Church has also been persistently antagonistic to free inquiry, and to all political reform. The indictment of the nineteenth century against the orthodox Christian Church is a severe one, which foretells her doom.

As humble workers in the cause of human improvement, we are proud as Freethinkers of the progress which has been made during the century now departing. We are the more gratified because many of the most prominent progressive thinkers to-day do not even profess to be Christians. The leaders of science and philanthropy in modern times are men who have the love of truth and the love of justice, who possess large and benevolent hearts, but who have no practical faith in Christianity. CHARLES WATTS.

Pious Doggrel.

ONE of the signs of the times is the growing dissatisfaction of religious people with many of the hymns sung in their places of worship—or, if not sung, at any rate included in their authorised hymnals. A general impression appears to exist that these collections of pious outpourings require very extensive overhauling, mainly with a view to the elimination of hymns that are obsolete, or otherwise out of consonance with the emotional tastes or the ordinary common sense of those who may be called upon to sing them.

This is a step in the right direction. The wonder is that it has not been taken before. No doubt, after the most careful revision by the Churches, there will still remain a large number of hymns that are distasteful to minds with reflective capabilities, or of a sensitively spiritual cast. But, at the present time, there are hymns—some of them frequently used—which, to any person who carefully reads them, are either outrageously repellent or grotesquely absurd. It does not follow that they are doctrinally wrong. In most cases, they are fairly accurate representations in verse of leading features of the Christian faith. Possibly it is that very fact which makes them so objectionable. Preachers may gloss over with euphemisms and circumlocutions many of the falsities and fatuities of theology. But it often seems to be the fate of the hymn-writer to bring out these defects in all their naked absurdity and glaring hideousness. While he tries to adorn he often disrobes. Hence there is probably nothing more calculated to shake the religious faith of a man of intelligence than a critical examination of a hymn-book. He is certain, of course, to be disgusted with the overpowering abundance of doggrel. It will be an odd thing if he is not disgusted with the doctrines as well.

From the *Methodist Times* we learn that the London ministers have been discussing the proposed new hymn-book of the Methodist Connexion. All seemed agreed as to the need of revision. One minister said it would undoubtedly be a gain to be able to sing the hymn commencing "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." That is *his* notion, which, fortunately for the national sanity, is not very extensively shared. There was no desire, he said, for any large selection from Sankey's hymns—which is quite intelligible. Dr. Osborn had so far yielded as to insert one, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by"; but who cared, asked the speaker, to give it out at the present day? Another speaker was against any attempt to propitiate the casual hearer. "They provided him with a seat and a book, and only got, it may be, in return, a button in the offertory bag." He would remove all hymns that could not be used, and take out all objectionable phrases. A large number might with advantage be abridged. No doubt. The less there is of them the better. Much of the discussion turned upon the retention of Wesley's hymns. The Rev. Alfred H. Vine observed that there was very little imagination in Wesley's hymns. Generally it was thought that many of them were too lofty for general use, which may be another way of saying that they are incomprehensible, and their sentiments too nonsensical for modern acceptance. The Rev. Allen Rees expressed the opinion that the reason why certain hymns were not sung was because, however essentially right the doctrines they contained might be, the phraseology employed wanted careful revision. Yes, not only careful, but drastic revision—the sort of revision which would leave very little behind.

While the Methodists were discussing their own special hymn-book, the *Church Gazette* comes out with a scathing criticism of Church hymns. Its leading article is devoted to that subject, and is headed "Wanted—Sensible Hymns." That is a pretty large requirement, in regard to which the demand is likely to be very much in excess of the supply. A hymn to be sensible would have to be devoid of nearly all that characterises that sort of composition, and then, of course, it would cease to be a hymn. The *Church Gazette* premises that the kind of emotion of which hymnology is an outcome must, if it is to be "either trustworthy or to escape mere sensationalism and utter drivel," place itself under the direction of reason and intellect. Such a power, if well and wisely directed, may provide an immense influence for good and for truth:—

> "But it may exert in some cases an equally potent influence against what is good and true, just because it has not submitted itself to the guide of reason, or it goes on singing an old song which is no longer in touch with what reason can believe to be true, or else it flatly ignores the surroundings of its own time. In the face of all this generally confessed inadequacy, or else ineptitude, a condition of things has come to pass where the emotions of the masses are forcibly laid hold of by a body of very misleading religious folk-lore which, from old association, has entrenched itself in their affections."

What, then, according to this Church journal, is very clearly required is a reformed hymn-book. It apparently will not be satisfied with a mere revision. It wants a book reformed both in doctrine and style. "Nothing short of a complete change in tone and object will at all meet the requirements of the case." Then it proceeds to indicate certain features which specially call for change. In connection with the season of Advent, it alludes to the "prevailing grossly materialistic pictures of a future event which most of us would prefer to spiritualise." It says that Lent is dealt with in a "foolishly morose and repulsive spirit, and when Easter is reached one finds the silly blunder invariably repeated that the fact of the Resurrection *proves* human immortality. Similar objections apply to the odes which celebrate many other special seasons."

When the *Church Gazette* touches upon the treatment of the Atonement as being nearly always on "the old demoralizing lines of a mere blood-purchase," it indicates one of the most objectionable features of orthodox hymnology. Can anything be more absolutely nauseating than the persistency with which "the blood" is bespattered about in the hymns that people are called upon, Sunday after Sunday, to sing? This sanguinary doctrine may, or may not, be deducible from Scriptural teaching; but the constant harping upon it is none the less sickening. In a recent leading article in the *British Weekly* the writer, quoting the words, "And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," observes quite triumphantly: "Always this is the clothing of the New Testament, no matter how it be bound. It is clothed in a vesture dipped with blood."

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This may account for the hymn-books of most of the Churches being similarly saturated, but it does not make them any the more acceptable to people who, not being savages on the war-path, have no special thirst for gore.

There is a great deal in modern hymn-books which is mere prosy and didactic stuff—"as prosy," says the *Church Gazette*, "as a Sunday-school lesson is, but should not be." There is a great deal, too, says that journal, of unreal other-worldliness coupled with neurotic emotionalism.

> "For popularity these crazy productions of neurotics to a very great extent carry the day. *In* church the popular view is transcendental, while *out* of it it is found to sink to the ordinary level, even sometimes below it, because these rhythmical raptures are not wholesome food. As examples of morbid emotionalism, it may suffice to refer to the well-known hymns which utter the conviction that—
>
> I want to be with Jesus,
>
> and,
>
> 'Tis weary waiting here.
>
> Now, it is not too much to say that, if these yearners for a better world were promptly taken at their own word, ninety-nine out of a hundred of them would be equally upset and astonished. The truth is that a wholesome human being does not want to die, and people who say they do are uttering high-pressure sentiment which they do not realise. Church poetry must be genuine, and represent real human feelings, instead of putting into the mouths of the great congregation sentiments which are in fact none of theirs, but which, sheep-like, they never repudiate, perhaps because the whole has to them a sense of unreality."

Then the *C. G.* takes exception to the "mawkish and childish type of hymns," of which it gives the following choice examples:—

> I will not let Thee go unless
> Thou tell Thy Name to me;
> With all Thy great salvation bless,
> And make me all like Thee.
>
> Oh, what the joy and the glory must be,
> Those endless Sabbaths the blessed ones see;
> Crown for the valiant, to weary ones rest,
> God shall be all and in all ever blest.

It is a little startling to find a Church journal criticising the hoary and much-extolled hymn, "Rock of ages cleft for me." But it classes that composition amongst the unintelligible hymnody, and observes that the meaning of the opening words is not at all obvious. "It does not occur to many a pious enthusiast to consider the actual meaning of the words he is using; it is sufficient that they are 'blessed words' like Mesopotamia." In conclusion, the *Church Gazette* says:—

> "Put briefly, then, our indictment comes to this. Hymns, as we have been accustomed to them, are largely found to be misleading, or maudlin, or prosy, or nonsensical. The poetry teaches error, and it is bad poetry at that. And if the poetry, or some of it, is not poetry, neither are all the tunes music."

These extracts almost read as if they were from back-numbers of the *Freethinker*. But, of course, we assume that the views they contain have been arrived at independently. Their value consists in the fact that they are so completely confirmatory of what has been said in this journal "many times and oft."

Francis Neale.

Christianity and Civilisation.—IV.

The Position of Woman.

(Continued from page 787.)

Many statements might be quoted from the Christian Fathers to show that, in their opinion, a plurality of wives might be permitted under the Christian dispensation. Space not permitting this, I will content myself with two or three quotations from more modern, but quite as prominent, believers. Martin Luther's opinion on polygamy is well known. His advice to our own Henry VIII. was to marry a second wife without troubling about a divorce from the first.* And to Philip of Hesse, under similar circumstances, his advice, in a lengthy document signed by himself and six of his most prominent followers, was: "There was nothing unusual in princes keeping concubines; and, although the lower orders might not perceive the excuses of the thing, the more intelligent know how to make allowances." Their final advice was that it would be better to marry secretly.* Luther's own opinion, given on another occasion, was: "As for me, I avow that I cannot set myself in opposition to men marrying several wives, or assert that such a course is repugnant to the Holy Scripture."†

In England Bishop Burnet, in a tract entitled *Is a Plurality of Wives in any case Lawful under the Gospel?* answered the question in the affirmative. Milton, examining at length the question in his tract on *The Special Government of Man*, says:—

> "I have not said, in compliance with the common opinion, *of one woman with one man*, lest I should by implication charge the holy patriarchs and pillars of our faith.....with habitual fornication and adultery, and lest I should be forced to exclude from the holy sanctuary of God as spurious the holy offspring that sprung from them—yea, the whole of the sons of Israel, for whom the sanctuary itself was made.....Either, therefore, polygamy is a true marriage, or all children born in that state are spurious, which would include the whole race of Jacob, the twelve holy tribes chosen by God.....On what grounds, however, can a practice be considered dishonorable or shameful which is prohibited to no one, even under the Gospel?.....It appears to me sufficiently established that polygamy is allowed by the law of God."‡

I have been led to this slight digression in dealing with the Old Testament in order to avoid the necessity of travelling twice over the same ground. We can now proceed in due order, taking next the New Testament. From the point of view of family ethics, the New Testament is almost a complete blank. Putting on one side the Old Testament, it would be impossible, from the first verse of Matthew to the last in Revelation, for anyone to select enough advice to regulate a family by. The family is practically ignored. The central figure of the book is a celibate; his greatest follower is a celibate likewise; celibacy is the condition of the angels in heaven; and the whole story opens with an account of a virgin birth, which—proceeding, as it does, on the assumption that the physical connection of the sexes is impure and sinful—is a direct insult to every husband and wife on the face of the earth. Among the twelve teachers selected by Jesus there were no women. His reply to the woman of Canaan, begging him to cure her daughter, is: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." His retort to his mother is: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" His greeting to Mary Magdalene, after the resurrection, "Touch me not," again emphasizes the Oriental and rabbinical idea that the very touch of a woman was pollution—a belief that expressed itself later in the Christian Church by women being forbidden to touch the Eucharist with their naked hands.

The same tone is maintained throughout the whole of the New Testament. The women are to learn in silence with all subjection; they are not permitted to speak in church;§ they were created for man, not man for them, and are to obey their husbands even as Sarah obeyed Abraham; for man is the head of the woman, as Christ is the head of the Church. Marriage is permitted, but only to avoid something worse. Paul's advice is: If a man is married, let him not seek to be single; if he is single, let him not seek to be wed. To give a maid in marriage is good, but to give her not is much better. Still, "it is better to marry than to burn." There are few people setting themselves up as teachers who have sanctioned marriage for a more disgusting reason than Paul, and few who have viewed it from a lower standpoint. Marriage, in brief, is little more than a legalised adultery, a concession to the weakness and impurity of human nature. An illustration of this is found in Revelation xiv. 3-4, where the 144,000 saints who wait on "the Lamb" are not "defiled with women, but were virgins." The only conclusion from the passage is that

* See *Life of Luther*, by Peter Rayne.

* Baring Gould's *Origin and Development of Religious Beliefs*, ii., p. 174, and *Life*, Michelet, p. 253.

† Michelet, p. 252.

‡ See Bohn's edition of *Milton's Prose Works*, iv., pp. 225-35.

§ One of the greatest divines of the seventeenth century declared that to allow "women teachers in the house of God were a gross absurdity" (Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, bk. 5, ch. lxii., s. 2).

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marriage is defilement, much lower than the celibate life, which is, as Hooker says, "angelic and divine."

With this conception of the nature and function of woman, as a foundation, of that portion of Christian sociology, the prospect of the liberal ideas existing in Rome receiving favorable recognition in the Christian Church was very slight indeed. To the primitive Christian, woman was not only a sinful being, but the quintessence of all sin. In the words of a Christian writer of eminence, to the early Christians "man was a human being made for the highest and noblest purposes; woman was a female (minus the 'human') made to serve only one. She was on the earth to inflame the heart of man with every evil passion."* Accordingly, every precaution had to be taken to keep this exceedingly dangerous fraction of the human race in a thoroughly subordinate position. At first women were permitted to act as doorkeepers in the Church, message carriers, and sweepers; but, after a while, even these offices were thought too exalted for her. Even the verse in Acts 17, referring to a "woman named Damaris," was deleted in some versions owing to a dislike of giving woman any prominence—a dislike that became abhorrence before the middle of the second century.† So strong was this determination to keep women in subjection that Principal Donaldson, starting his inquiry with the traditional bias in favor of Christianity, was driven to the admission: "In the first three centuries I have not been able to see that Christianity had any favorable effect on the position of women, but, on the contrary, that it tended to lower their character and restrict the range of their activity."‡

Throughout the writings of the early Fathers woman is almost universally held up to reprobation and abuse. Mosheim remarks that in the third century there was "an almost general persuasion that they who took wives were, of all others, most subject to the influence of malignant demons." This belief, that women were more open to the influence of demons than men, existed in full force until as late as the seventeenth century, when the majority of the people charged with witchcraft were women owing to the same belief. St. Chrysostom describes woman as a "necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill." Tertullian addresses her thus: "You are the devil's gateway; you are the unsealer of that forbidden tree; you are the first deserter of the divine laws; you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die." St. Jerome affirmed that the touch of a woman was as much to be dreaded as the bite of a mad dog. Gregory Thaumaturgus declares: "Moreover, among all women I sought for chastity proper to them, and I found it in none. And verily a person may find one man chaste among a thousand, but a woman never." Clement of Alexandria's emphatic advice is: "But, above all, it seems right that we turn away from the sight of woman. For it is sin not only to touch, but to look."§

Enormous care had to be taken to keep this terrible creature in order. In place of the position that we see woman occupying in the public life of Rome, the sum-total of Christian advice was that she was to stay at home and keep herself in the background as much as possible. If she possesses beauty, it must be either concealed or obliterated. To dye the hair is a deadly sin, since it controverts the statement of Jesus, "Thou canst not make one hair black or white." Adornment of any kind was forbidden; and Clement asserts that the use of a mirror or a headdress could only be indulged in by women who were lost to all sense of shame and decency. The childish stupidity of the Christian Fathers in dealing with such matters is incredible to anyone who has not waded through their insufferably dull writings. The sum of their counsel is that women are to be shunned by all who are desirous of leading a devout life; their prurient imagination detecting temptation in mere contact with one of the opposite sex. In England it was even decreed that a penance of forty days should be inflicted on the priest who, without thought of evil, indulged in the pleasure of conversation with a woman.* A saintly life might be wrecked by looking at the face of even a mother or a sister. To outrage the affections of mother or sister was, indeed, one of the chief proofs of saintly virtue.†

Yet it is the men who held these views concerning women that, we are told, "restored woman to her rightful place, and created that best of God's blessings on earth—the Christian home." And this in face of the plain historic fact that the absence of home life is one of the marked and striking features of early Christian history. I have already dwelt upon the views of Paul concerning marriage, by whom it was regarded as at best a necessary concession to man's sinfulness, only to be tolerated because its prevention would lead to much worse things, and upon the striking absence of teaching in the New Testament concerning home life. In the New Testament about the only instance in which children are prominently introduced is where they are utilised as an illustration of the state of ignorance and trustfulness which people are to encourage if they would inherit the kingdom of heaven. Principal Donaldson remarks, in the article I have already quoted from: "It is strange how seldom children are mentioned in the Christian writings of the second and third centuries. Almost nothing is said of their training; no efforts are mentioned as being made for their instruction. The Christians had come to the belief that the world had enough of children, and was fully stocked, and that every birth was a cause of sorrow and not of joy.....Tertullian describes children as 'burdens which are to most of us all unsuitable, as being perilous to faith'.....During this period there is a striking absence of home life in the history of Christians. No son succeeds the father, no wife comforts the wearied student, no daughter soothes the sorrow of the aged bishop. Perhaps this absence of domestic affection, this deficiency in healthy and vigorous offspring, this homelessness, may account in some degree for the striking features of the next century, and especially the prevalent hardness of heart."

This absence of home life is easily understandable when we bear in mind the peculiar views of marriage held by the early Christian teachers—men who were looked upon by their followers as second only to Jesus Christ himself. The example of Jesus was cited as proof positive that the celibate life was the highest type of excellence; and the language of Paul, together with the supposed origin of evil as the result of the first sexual embrace, led inevitably to marriage being deprecated as much as possible. Of the early Christian writings Lecky remarks:—

> "Two or three beautiful descriptions of this institution (marriage) have been culled out of the immense mass of the patristic writings; but, in general, it would be difficult to conceive anything more coarse or more repulsive than the manner in which they regarded it.....Marriage was regarded almost exclusively in its lowest aspect. The tender love which it elicits, the holy and beautiful domestic qualities that follow in its train, were almost absolutely omitted from consideration."‡

And in the same vein Dean Milman asserts that the early Christian writers seem blind to the social aspect of marriage, and completely unconscious of the softening and humanising influence of parental and filial love.

C. Cohen.

(To be continued.)

P.S.—I have been requested by a correspondent to furnish authorities for my statement that Trajan founded orphan asylums, that Antoninus Pius added to their number, and that the Temples of Serapis, etc., were used as hospitals as well as temples. The handiest authorities for my correspondent to consult will be Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ii., p. 77; Draper, *Intell. Dev. Europe*, pp. i., 393-99; Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, pp. 14-15, where he will find full authority for all statements made. Much information may also be obtained from Wylie's *History of Hospitals* and Beddoe's *History of the Healing Art.*

* Rev. Principal Donaldson, *Contemporary Review*, September, 1889.

† See Professor Ramsay's *Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 59-62.

‡ *Contemporary Review*, September, 1889.

§ This writer's chapter dealing with the relation of the sexes is too indecent to be translated into English, and so stands in the "Ante-Nicene Library" in Latin.

* Lea, p. 165.

† For proofs see Lecky, *Morals*, ii., pp. 116-137.

‡ *History of European Morals*, ii., p. 321.

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Atheists and Agnostics.

An American Editor's View.

We are inclined to think that the difference between the Atheist and the Agnostic is somewhat exaggerated by the latter. When the Atheist is asked if he believes in God, he says "No." The Agnostic says: "I don't know whether there is a God or not"; which is not an answer to the question. If he believes in a God, he is a Theist; if he does not, he is an Atheist; and no Agnostic was ever suspected of believing in a deity. When the Atheist says there is no God, he gives it out, not as a matter of fact, but of belief. He means that he does not believe there is a God; and virtually the same state of mind is to be inferred from a man calling himself an Agnostic. We have heard of Agnostics saying they had no belief on the subject, but the statement never engaged our credence. Intelligent minds have reached a conclusion on this theme, and the only thing in doubt is as to whether they shall tell it.

Along with a belief in God has always gone a belief in devils. At the present day it is unorthodox to deny the existence of the great Adversary of Souls, the Supreme Cause of Wickedness. The Demonist and the Ademonist are in the same class with the Theist and Atheist, who, Mr. Holyoake avers, have no logical existence, and must go to the same logical limbo. But what will the modest Agnostic do in the matter? Will he, when interrogated as to the existence of a Devil, "simply say that, having no information on the subject, he does not know"? Once the denial of a belief in the Devil was an extravagant form of heresy. Probably there were a considerable number of persons who wished for some such word as Agnosticism, whereby they might define their position in this respect—some word which would commit them to neither belief nor disbelief, but allow them to act as disinterested spectators until the success of one or the other body of disputants should indicate the proper side for a prudent individual to espouse.

By general consent the Devil has lapsed, but his younger brother, or his offspring, God, still commands belief. Perchance we should be thankful that we live in the day of Agnosticism when, in the interest of accurate thought, we are permitted to say we don't know whether such belief has any validity or not. Those who denied the being and attributes of the Devil could have been met with a demand for the grounds of their denial; they could have been shown that, without affirming a Devil, it was impossible to account for most of the things in the universe, and, if they were not brought to the blush for denying what they could never prove not to be so, they must have been as incorrigibly presumptuous as their Atheistic successors.

Professor Huxley, who first emitted the word Agnostic, was a man whose utterances were marked by great cautiousness of statement. He denied nothing—not even miracles. He was so generous to his opponents that he would agree to believe in the birth of Jesus by a virgin mother provided the fact could be established. He observed this caution because as a man of science he did not wish to go outside of the verifiable. To him nothing was necessary and nothing impossible; he asked only that a thing should be demonstrable. As unprofessional persons, we can afford to be a trifle more reckless. We are permitted a little more latitude. We may say, as a strictly scientific person could not, that the dead do not come to life, that miracles are violations of the laws of nature, and that the birth of Christ with only one parent is not to be credited. That Agnosticism is generally a shield for Atheistic dodgers we do not believe; some of the most aggressive Freethinkers and framers of the most convincing arguments against the being of a God call themselves Agnostics; but it always seemed to us that the Agnostic position was one admirably adapted to the use of persons who wished to dodge.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Every child is born into the world an Atheist, and if he grows into a Theist his deity differs with the country in which the believer may happen to be born, or the people among whom he may happen to be educated. The belief is the result of education or organisation. Religious belief is powerful in proportion to the want of scientific knowledge on the part of the believer. The more ignorant the more credulous.—*Charles Bradlaugh.*

Murderers often make an edifying end. Nordlund, the Swede, who committed seven murders on board the *Prinz Karl* last May, was beheaded the other day at Vesteraas. He sang some verses of a psalm before laying his head on the block. We suppose he is now in heaven, with all the unhung scoundrels of the Old Testament.

Charles Brewer Smith, of Wolverhampton, solicitor, has been arrested on a charge of misappropriating trust money, to which he has confessed. He was secretary to the local branch of the English Church Union. Not an "infidel," therefore.

Acid Drops.

Wonders will never cease. Count Tolstoi, the famous Russian writer, has generally been claimed by the Socialists in this country as "one of them," in spite of his peculiar brand of Christianity. It appears, however, that he is nothing of the sort. Indeed, he is said to have finished a book, to be called *The New Slavery*, in which he specially attacks the German Social Democratic movement. He regards the Socialists as the great enemies of the kingdom of God, and their system as a worse slavery than the slavery they seek to destroy. The panacea for all the ills that afflict mankind is Christian Anarchy, with self-sacrifice and non-resistance to evil as its principal doctrines.

We were talking the other day to a Freethinker who accepts Tolstoi's social and political philosophy without his religion. "So much do I hate the idea of taking life," he said, "that I would not kill a man if I found him murdering my wife or my child; sooner than take his life I would let him finish his work." "Well," we said, "you may think so now, but at the critical moment you would act on your instincts. That kind of talk is only possible while you *feel safe*. You trust to law and order, and the policemen in the streets, and while you are protected you can afford to indulge in these eccentric theories. It is easy to profess what you feel you will never have to practise. In a ruder state of society, where every man has to protect himself, you would abandon your theory and buy a revolver."

Jesus Christ himself—assuming him to have preached the Sermon on the Mount—lived in a province of the Roman Empire, where the laws were regularly administered, and where life and property were as safe as they are in England to-day. Not even a handful would have listened to his doctrine of non-resistance in a country where every man had to attend to his own self-defence. In ordinary civilised societies the personal instinct of self-defence very largely dies out. That is why so many decent people put up with insults and ruffianism in public places, instead of knocking the insulter or the ruffian down. Very often the decent people do not even venture to remonstrate, but bear the infliction in silence—feeling a bit cowardly all the time.

The reputed miser, Robert Arthington, of Leeds, who recently left £250,000 to the London Missionary Society, should be safe for kingdom-come. He seems to have been a miserable sort of creature on earth. The men of God who are mostly interested in this windfall of a quarter of a million have met and offered a special prayer of thanksgiving to God for the legacy. Then they set to work to whitewash the testator. They admitted that he lived in a penurious manner, that he denied himself nearly everything, that he was eccentric, and so on. Eccentric, indeed, he must have been, for he starved himself to send the Bible to tribes and peoples who do not want it, or who can't understand it if they receive it, and who, in any case, are not at all likely to be as grateful as the poorer classes of his own countrymen might have been if he had left the money for their social amelioration.

"Squalor and personal uncleanliness," the *Daily News* says, *apropos* of this case, "are not necessary adjuncts of the saintly character." Perhaps not; but some of the greatest saints were extremely filthy. Some boasted that they had never changed their clothes, some that they had never touched water. One saint, who resolved never to touch the cleansing fluid, had on one occasion to cross a stream. There was no boat, and no one to carry him across. So he prayed to the Lord in his extremity, lest he should wet his saintly dirty feet and his dirty saintly legs; and the Lord wafted him across through the air, thus saving him from the contamination of clean water.

The British pilgrimage to Rome, headed by the Duke of Norfolk, falls into a line with other cheap trips. "Messrs. Gaze and Sons," we read, "announce the issue of special tickets at special rates for the journey, hotel accommodation, and board."

Lady Katharine Manners, eldest daughter of the Duke of Rutland, was found dead in Knipton pond. The newspapers say that she had been laboring under "strong religious impressions." Well, we all know what that means; though it doesn't do to speak too plainly about a Duke's daughter.

Serious accusations were made at Pekin against Christian natives, and Christian missionaries too, at a recent meeting of the foreign Ministers. M. Pichon, it is reported, raised once more the question of obtaining an indemnity for the native Christians. Sir Ernest Satow observed that, in Pekin and the adjacent country, the native Christians had indemnified themselves. This remark is due to the fact that the native Christians have joined in the unrestrained looting

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which has gone on in Pekin. Some of the missionaries, too, have joined in it, and have justified themselves and the native converts by saying that they had a right to reimburse themselves for their losses. This is a new reading of Christ's injunction, "If any man would take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

The missionaries further defend themselves by declaring that Mr. Conger had authorised their action; but this assertion is contradicted. At the meeting of Ministers, it is said, the truth of Sir Ernest Satow's remark was generally admitted, and the point was not contested even by M. Pichon.

Mark Twain is always level-headed. They say he is an unbeliever in the creeds of Christianity. At the annual meeting of the Public Education Association in Berkeley Lyceum last week he said: "Foreigners are the cause of all the trouble in China. The Chinese don't want them any more than we want the Chinese. They have as much right as a nation to exclude foreigners as we have to exclude them. China never wanted the foreigners, and if the foreigners were gone the trouble would be all over. Now, my sympathies are all with the Boxers. The Boxers are the only patriots China has got. The newspapers call them hard names, but all they are after is to get the foreigners out of their country, and I hope that they will have all success in doing so. If I am opposed to the Chinaman being here, then I am a Boxer, and the only difference between us Boxers here and the China Boxer is that we carried our point and the Chinese didn't."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Another statue—and of Jesus Christ! It will be erected in London, too, where one would think that there are already enough of the hideous effigies called statues. This one, which is likely to out-Herod Herod, is to be erected in front of the new cathedral at Westminster. It is an outcome of the Catholic pilgrimage to Rome for the opening of the century.

Let us hasten to offer our condolences to the sculptor, whoever he may be. How is he going to find out what Jesus Christ was like? The Cromwell statue at Westminster, which is one of the best, as it is the latest, statue in London, is figured out on the lines of authentic portraits. But who has got a portrait of Jesus Christ? The sculptor will have to fall back upon his imagination, or the imaginations of others, and try to spiritualise the presentment of a young Jew of the period when Christ is said to have lived. It is not an enviable task. He is sure to have many unkind critics, for no one seems to agree with anybody else about that much-disputed person who may, or may not, have walked on the shores of Galilee, as related in some obviously unveracious traditions.

Perhaps, if the sculptor makes it perfectly clear that his subject has a head and also hands and feet, he will achieve about as much as may be reasonably expected of him. At any rate, he can always turn round on his critics and say: If he wasn't like this, what *was* he like—and how do you know it?

The hard-worked clergy! A correspondent of the *Church Times*, writing on country parsons and their indolent ways, refers to a rural clergyman who never had his dinner until half-past four on Sunday afternoon, for then he could eat it in peace, knowing his work was over for another week!

The following story has been received by the *Christian World* from a correspondent: "A certain divine, well known by name to our readers as a gentleman whose one aim in life is to annihilate the Higher Critics, was engaged to lecture in a certain church not far from Leeds. An audience of some thirty or forty ladies assembled, to whom the reverend gentleman discoursed upon the blasphemies and wickednesses of such men as Dr. Driver, Dr. Cheyne, Dean Farrar, and others. To prove his points the lecturer quoted liberally from the writings of these gentlemen and others. At the close of the meeting a lady, well advanced in years, remarked to a group of people: 'Well, to think that our minister should have brought a man like this down here to lecture against the Blessed Book. It is awful. But I believe in the Bible for all he says against it.' The moral is obvious."

In a London church one Sunday the preacher was reading the announcements for the following week, but the people were not prepared for the following announcement, and were both surprised and horrified when the preacher said: "The preacher for next Sunday may be seen nailed on the church door."

A curious instance of lingering superstition was recently afforded at a funeral at Swatow, where a gorgeous procession assembled outside the front door of the house of the deceased, and the coffin, with handsome coverings, was brought out from the main entrance, evidently for interment. The procession marched on, but after it had passed well out of sight four men crept out of the back door of the residence bearing another coffin, which really contained the remains of the departed. The casket which had been taken away with so much pomp and ceremony was empty. This is done to perplex the Devil.

Mrs. Eliza Pritchard went to a gypsy called Selina Smith, who pretended to be a planet ruler, with a view to obtaining a fine business. For the sum of £20 a powder worth a guinea an ounce was handed over to the lady applicant. She was to put it in the fire at twelve o'clock at night, and if she wished while it was burning the business was sure to come. Finally, the police got wind of the affair, and the planet-ruler was arrested at Uttoxeter. She is to be tried at the Petty Sessions, and bail has been refused. No wonder Christianity flourishes in a country where such superstition abounds.

A minister in Glasgow asked an urchin who was standing looking in at one of the Sabbath-school windows how he would like to join the Sunday-school and grow up a good man. "What sort o' Sunday-schule is 't? 'Stablished?" "Yes," said the clergyman. "It is connected with the Established Church. Are you not coming in?" "Na," replied the boy; "I tried the 'Stablished Kirk Sunday-schule last year, an' I only got twa fardin' oranges an' a pock o' sweeties at the Christmas-tree, sae I'm gaun tae gie the Free Kirk a trial this year."

An anxious inquirer writes to the *Church Gazette*, asking "why God for a thousand years dealt so familiarly with an unknown little country, when now for two thousand years He has been absolutely silent—when, if ever, the world needs an infallible instruction from Him. What is the credit today which an intellectual clergy assigns to the marvellous stories of the wilderness or the questionable morality of the books of Moses? Did God give the ritual of Moses? Did He order the extermination of the Canaanites and the destruction of whole cities—men, women, and children? How much is history, how much myth? We complain of the indifference of the people to our services and religion. Is it possible that the answer is: You give us fiction for history, and priestcraft for truth?"

A well-known clerical advocate at Genoa has been arrested on a charge of abstracting securities worth £14,000 from the Vatican. The property is said to have been found in his possession. One would have thought that the holy atmosphere of the Vatican would have rendered such purloining impossible. The Pope has tremendous powers in regard to the hereafter, and the "well-known clerical advocate" is now probably quaking in his shoes. But, very likely, his greatest trouble is that he did not get off with his booty.

"Clerks in holy orders" seem to be turning up in police-court docks pretty frequently of late. The Rev. Alfred Freeman, of Hampton-road, Forest-gate, has been remanded at the Thames Police-court on the charge of insulting behavior to women and girls in the public streets. Of course, he tried a sanctimonious whine, but the magistrate declined to be moved. Later on, however, he bound the prisoner over and discharged him.

As against the wonderful conversions said to be effected by Evangelistic services, the *Sunday Companion* finds it necessary to make a general complaint in regard to persons who endeavor to filch money from the collection plate, by asserting that they have by mistake put in a florin for a penny, and who ask for the coin to be returned.

Somebody had better look after the Rev. J. M. Gibbon, the City Merchants' lecturer for the present month. The *British Weekly* speaks highly of his "ingenuity in giving a modern application to Bible subjects." We should say that, for a believer, he lets his imagination run riot with gross irreverence. It is not for him, as a preacher of the Gospel, to deal flippantly with what, to him, should be solemn and sacred subjects. Banter and burlesque are reserved for those who rejoice in unbelief. What is in an Atheist a "mere choleric word" is in a preacher "rank blasphemy."

This preacher's latest and mildest effort was on what he called "the Round Table Conference at Jerusalem," *vide* Acts xv. He drew a picture of the Apostles sitting at a table, when there enter Galileo, Lyell, and Darwin, who take their seats, proclaiming the discoveries of modern science. But the Apostles are not a bit dismayed. Not they. On the contrary, they assure these great scientists, in the politest terms possible, that the revolution they have accomplished in human knowledge does not affect in the smallest degree the essential principles of Christianity. Startled the Apostles might be by the departure from the Mosaic cosmogony, but, according to the Rev. Gibbon, they still replied: "We believe that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved"; and nothing could move them from that "impregnable position."

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Could anything be more idiotic? Of course, the Christian Church has given up the Mosaic Cosmogony, but how long ago, and why, and after how much persecution of those who opposed it, including poor Galileo mentioned by this Rev. Gibbon—unworthy bearer of a great name? The Christian Church has not even quietly climbed down. It has been kicked down. And the clerics must not be allowed to forget it.

Posing as a prophet in Israel, the Rev. Gibbon says—and this seems to be about the sanest part of his discourse: "In time to come the Churches must be prepared to meet the onslaughts of criticism. The attack on the Old Testament has been made, and the attack on the New follows." Why, certainly!

Another witty retort is attributed to Lord Rosebery. He entertained the members of the Edinburgh Town Council to luncheon at Dalmeny after their election. During the drive out to the house one of the members of the Corporation was discussing with his companion the lost ten tribes of Israel. "I believe," he said, "that the Anglo-Saxon race are the lost tribes of Israel. I have held that belief for the last ten years." Then suddenly, after a pause: "I wonder if Lord Rosebery believes it." Nothing more was said on the subject; but after luncheon, when the members of the Corporation were moving about Dalmeny House, this gentleman walked up to Lord Rosebery, and, without preface or warning, launched the following query at him: "Do you believe, my Lord, that the Anglo-Saxon race are the lost tribes of Israel?" The Earl fixed his interlocutor with a disconcerting gaze, and remarked: "I don't know; but if they are I hope they will not lose themselves again."

The *Rock* predicts another General Election at an early date. It doesn't think the present shortsighted Government can last. It is led to this belief mainly by the fact that when Parliament met there was "no invocation of the Divine blessing" in the Queen's Speech, nor is there any reference to Almighty God in the Queen's Speech proroguing the House. How can such a Government expect to survive?

In order to raise funds for the restoration of the tower and spire of his church, the rector of Princes Risborough has asked several ladies to make pork pies every week and sell them to the parishioners. This may raise the steeple; but who is going to raise the parishioners from the dead after they have eaten the pies and gasped their final breath?

The *Lancet*, after harrowing Christian communities with discourses on the bacterial dangers of a common use of the sacred chalice at Holy Communion, is good enough to suggest a new method. This is the plan adopted in the chapel of a Russian prison. The priest cuts the bread into little pieces and dips them in the cup containing the wine. Then with the spoon he places the piece of bread and wine into the penitent's mouth. Thus there is no drinking out of the cup, and it would be much easier to have a clean spoon for each communicant than a separate cup.

The performance must look very comical—something like the way in which brimstone and treacle used to be ladled out to the boys in boarding-schools years ago.

The same medical authority is also down on holy water. It says that the holy water in Roman Catholic churches is a serious matter. "Innumerable fingers, not always scrupulously clean, are dipped into the water. In Spain, especially, and during the great cholera epidemic of 1885, we have noted that the holy water was absolutely dirty, and living organisms could be seen with the naked eye, so that what the microscope would have revealed may well be imagined."

The Psalms have come in for some more criticism from the Dr. T. K. Cheyne, Oriel Professor at Oxford. Recently he delivered an address to the Churchmen's Union on "The Christian Use of the Psalms," in which he disposed of the once common error that they were prophetic of Christ. The text was often very corrupt, and the true meaning by no means on the surface. There was no proof of any special inspiration in the Psalmists. He explained the forty-fifth Psalm by saying that, as King David and King Solomon had wives, so the Messiah (of the Jews, not of the Christians) must have a spouse too, but a more glorious one. This had been wrongly interpreted as referring to Christ and his Church.

The Penitential Psalms, said Dr. Cheyne, did not anticipate Christ. They were but the utterances of the pious community. Finally, he urged upon his hearers to courageously accept all proved conclusions arising from a critical study of the Psalter, and not to be content with the "familiar though beautiful," if it be not equally "true."

We ought indeed to thank God for our possession of his Holy Word, and for the marvellous care he has taken in its transmission. The Bishop of Worcester has found it necessary to issue an official notice to the clergy of his diocese requesting them to read the First Lesson for Christmas Day from the Revised Version. He says: "The rendering of some verses in the ninth chapter of Isaiah in the Authorised Version is exactly contrary to the true sense, which is correctly given in the Revised Version."

Last summer the garrison church, Halifax, Nova Scotia, was renovated. The Lord must have quietly smiled. He knew what was coming. The other Friday a fire broke out, and the "sacred edifice" was partially destroyed.

A Congregational chapel was burnt down on Sunday at Coventry. The adjoining schools were saved. Does this mean that "Providence" prefers schools to gospel-shops, and teachers to preachers? We hope so.

The *Daily News* is satirical at the expense of Dr. Parker. If he does not raise the morals, it says, he will at least add something to the gaiety of the town. Our contemporary suggests that the Archbishop of Canterbury might edit the *Times* for "one immaculate week."

A suggestion is made that, following Dr. Parker, the *Sun* people should let Dr. Dowie try his hand at editing their paper.

There is to be a Simultaneous Evangelistic Mission at the beginning of the new year on what is described as "an absolutely national and entirely unprecedented scale." At a recent preliminary meeting in London the Rev. Price Hughes gave an address. He urged that the great personal preparation they needed was that they should "forsake all" and follow Christ; that, like the rich young ruler, they should "sell all they had." Very well; why does not Mr. Price Hughes begin by selling all that *he* has? But perhaps he intends the advice for other folks. Beggary is not much in his line, except in so far as it means begging for the Twentieth Century Fund of 1,000,000 guineas, which will make the Methodist Church more than "passing rich."

The good old Westminster Confession of Faith, which so many generations of Scotch Presbyterians have regarded as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is apparently to be "revised"—that is to say, shown to be wrong as it stands. A Committee of leading Presbyterians at Washington have unanimously agreed to recommend that this shall be done. But, of course, the battle royal is yet to come, in the General Assembly, where the old-fashioned orthodox party may once more triumph. Presbyterianism may be expected to die hard.

"Sykes's Singularities" is the heading of a special column in the *Southend Telegraph*. We presume they are contributed by a well-known local Freethinker of that name. One paragraph refers to the case of Mr. Waggoner, of Toledo, U.S.A., a seventy-four-year-old infidel who found Jesus and burnt his valuable Freethought library. Mr. Sykes has apparently not heard that this "valuable library" was worth about twenty-five dollars at the outside, instead of "several hundred pounds." The Freethinkers in America laugh at old Waggoner and his antics. They know that he is simply fishing for a little cheap notoriety.

A Suffolk clergyman has found a new use for incense. It drives away moths and bats. Yes, and it drives away intelligent people at the same time.

Rev. Silas Hocking admits that "Christianity is not flourishing now." "There are," he says, "less people attending public worship in England to-day, in proportion to the population, than was the case fifty years ago. There are less young people in our Sunday-schools by 20,000 than was the case five years ago." How sad!

Catholic priests cannot play their little games as easily in this country as they can in some others. There is the Rev. Alexander Smith, for instance, a Roman Catholic priest at Salford, who is committed for trial on a charge of intimidation. It is alleged that he invited Thomas Murphy, an egg and fish dealer, to vote for Roman Catholic candidates at the School Board election; that, on Thomas Murphy refusing to do so, Father Smith threatened to have his shop boycotted by all his Roman Catholic customers; and that an abusive crowd assembled and broke his windows.

Rev. Alexander Morison, parish minister at Sandy, Orkney Islands, seems to share the amorous complexion of Saint David. He has been found guilty of adultery with the wife of Dr. E. J. Wenyon, of Dundee; the Court of Session, Edinburgh, granting a decree nisi, with £100 damages against the reverend co-respondent.

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 23, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise."

December 30, Athonæum Hall.

January 6, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—December 23, Camberwell. January 20, Sheffield; 27, Leicester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

S. HOLMAN.—Kindly let us know early in the New Year how the effort in connection with Mr. Treharne-Jones's lectures is going, and we will see what assistance can be rendered from headquarters.

H. R. CLIFTON.—Thanks for your interesting letter and the portrait of your nonogenarian friend. Will you kindly present to him our compliments and best wishes? It affords us much pleasure to know that he enjoys reading the *Freethinker*. His own letter, by the way, is very well written. With regard to Shakespeare, the anecdote you are good enough to reproduce is of very doubtful value. The statement that Shakespeare was a ne'er-do-well is against *all* the evidence. There is plenty of proof that he was a very careful business man.

F. J. VOISEY.—Thanks for cuttings. We note your suggestion that Mr. Cohen's articles on "Christianity and Civilisation" should be reprinted in pamphlet form.

H. HEWSON.—Inserted in another column.

R. THOMAS.—*Bible Romances*, *Bible Heroes*, and *Bible Handbook* together make a good help for the general study of the Christian Scriptures. You might go farther and fare worse. It is a great mistake to suppose that the dullest books are the most informing. Readers do not learn much unless they are kept awake.

E. OSBOURNE.—Darwin did *not* believe in the God of the Bible, nor had he a positive belief in *any* God. If you get Mr. Foote's *Darwin on God*—published at our office, price sixpence—you will find nearly all he wrote on the subject, collected together from his various books. This pamphlet should be kept at hand by every Freethinker.

J. C. B.—See acknowledgment. We have only printed your initials, as you requested us to do before. We hope, with you, that the Twentieth Century Fund will realise the amount (£1,000) we first suggested.

W. SAUNDERS.—Sorry we cannot give you the precise reference. We have not time to look it up.

T. A. WILLIAMS.—Pamphlets received. We will look through them, though the subject is so painful. You know how the late Colonel Ingersoll hated vivisection.

W. P. BALL.—At the close of the century we thank you very heartily for your weekly batches of useful cuttings.

D. P. SWEETLAND.—We have handed your letter to Miss Vance, who will see into the matter and write you. Thanks for your good wishes.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—C. Hermann, 2s. 6d.; D. P. Sweetland, 2s. 6d.; W. Sanders, 1s.; F. G., 2s. 6d.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Promises redeemed:—J. C. B., £5 (second half of £10); C. J. Peacock, £5 5s.

LOUIS LEVINE.—Thanks for the two American editions you send us of Paine's *Age of Reason*—each minus the third part, which is always included in the English editions. Each is priced on the cover at a quarter of a dollar—say one shilling in English money. How do you make out that they eclipse our projected sixpenny edition, which will be complete? Surely, half the lowest American price *is* remarkable. No doubt a twopenny *Age of Reason* would circulate more widely, but it would involve a great loss. You say a subscription should be got up for the purpose; but the idea is not practicable just at present.

F. E. WILLS.—Cuttings received with thanks.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Mr. Foote is sending you subjects for January 6.

A. SABINE.—Try plain English.

E. G. H. (Paris).—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

HORACE DAWSON.—Please note that our address is 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C., to which all communications should be sent direct.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Manchester Evening Chronicle—Lucifer—Southend Telegraph—Secular Thought—Crescent—Doncaster Gazette—Birmingham Daily Post—Truthseeker (New York).

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Special.

FREETHINKERS all over Great Britain and Ireland are requested to note that the second "Shilling Week" in aid of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund is fixed for the beginning of January. During the first seven days of that month—the first in the new century—the "rank and file" of the Freethought party are invited to send me at least one shilling each, and as many more as possible. Every subscription will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker*. Some of those who subscribed to the October "Shilling Week" will probably subscribe again. Hundreds who did *not* subscribe will now have another (and last) opportunity. I beg them all to remember that this Fund is a specially important one. Its object is to counteract the immense efforts of the Christian Churches. Vast sums of money are being raised to spread and strengthen the Christian superstition. It is the duty of Freethinkers to oppose that enterprise. This cannot be done by mere wishes, but only by practical means. And the *most* practical means is *giving* something for "the good old cause."

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

OWING to the Christmas holidays we shall have to publish next week's *Freethinker* on Monday, December 24; otherwise it would not be circulated at the usual time through the trade. Branch secretaries, and other persons concerned, will therefore please note that Lecture Notices, correspondence, etc., for that number must reach us by Saturday, December 22. We gave notice of this last week; we repeat it now; and those who fail to act upon it will have no right to throw any blame upon us.

There was another capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Blood of Christ." Mr. Foote occupies the same platform again this evening (Dec. 23). He will take a seasonable subject; in fact, he will preach a sermon on the text, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise." It will be very different from most of the sermons preached that evening, and Christians ought to be got there somehow to hear it. Perhaps our London friends will let as many of them know as possible.

Mr. Foote's new brochure, *The Mother of God*, is somewhat delayed in publication. At the last moment he decided to make further additions, in order to render the little work more comprehensive; and it seemed a pity to waste a considerable quantity of the matter he had collected. The printers are getting on as fast as possible with the new matter, and the brochure will be ready very shortly.

There are still several subscribers to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, whose promises were printed in our list some time ago, who have not yet remitted. The understanding was that they should do so before the end of 1900. Mr. Foote is, therefore, holding back his statement and observations for another week. This will give all an opportunity of remitting within the time originally specified. Next week's *Freethinker* will be dated December 30, and will be the last issue in the present century.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured at Camberwell upon "The Delusions of Spiritualism," to a very appreciative audience. Mr. Victor Roger presided. A gentleman, who said he "had travelled some miles to hear Mr. Watts," offered some pleasant opposition. Mr. Watts occupies the same platform this evening, Sunday, December 23.

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Mr. Watts took the second of the course of four free lectures at the Temperance Hall, Blackfriars-road, on Monday evening. The audience was slightly improved, but still very moderate. It was hoped that the South London friends would make a special effort to render these meetings more successful. Mr. Foote takes the third lecture of this course on Monday evening, January 7.

We are pleased to see that the Birmingham N.S.S. Branch has once more asserted its claim to the common rights of citizenship. Unfortunately, the new School Board is as bigoted as the old one, if not more so. By a majority of 11 to 4 it has resolved to continue the old policy of exclusion against the Secularists. They may have the use of Board schools for their public meetings, but they must not sell or distribute any literature. This condition only applies to their case, and they justly decline to accept it. There should be one common regulation for all sections of the community, and when Christians say that Secular literature is "objectionable" it simply means that they are Christians.

Mr. Foote visits Birmingham for three lectures on the first Sunday in January. He will have something more to say then about the policy of the School Board towards the Secularists.

The twenty-fourth Annual Congress of the American Secular Union, held at Cincinnati, does not seem to have been a towering success. What our American friends appear to want, most of all, is a capable organising leader. Editor Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker*, was present, and had a hard job to prevent the Congress from being packed by outsiders, who wanted to abrogate the "membership" condition, and thus carry all before them. The new President is Dr. J. B. Wilson, of Cincinnati. Mr. E. C. Reichwald (Chicago) continues as secretary—an office there is not likely to be a competition for, as it carries with it no salary and all the drudgery. Mrs. Josephine K. Henry is first Vice-President, and Mr. E. M. Macdonald second Vice-President. Mr. Samuel Toorney is Treasurer. We wish the American Secular Union all success in the new year.

One part of the American Secular Union's report will be pleasant reading to the Freethinkers of this country. "We congratulate ourselves," it says, "upon our successful fight against forcing the Bible into the public schools." Our American friends have the task of *keeping* the Bible out of the public schools; we have the harder task of *getting* it out. Their success, however, may be regarded as an augury of our own.

The Secularists of Pontypridd and district held a very successful meeting on Sunday evening, when a start was made towards organising the local forces of Freethought in connection with the services of Mr. Treharne-Jones—the gentleman who lately seceded from the Church of England. A special Fund was opened, and a fair beginning was made with it. One who was present promised £5 if £25 were raised by the end of January. Much enthusiasm was shown, and a comprehensive propaganda was marked out. Pontypridd has been chosen as the centre of operations, which will extend into the two Rhonddas and the Merthyr and Aberdare valleys. Local "saints" who are able and willing to assist in this good work, financially or otherwise, are earnestly requested to communicate with Mr. S. Holman, 5 Jenkin-street, Porth.

London Freethinkers should note the date—Monday, January 14—of their Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant, under the auspices of the N.S.S. Executive. Some fresh features will be introduced on the program, and the collection cards will be omitted in view of the demands made upon the party of late. Mr. Foote will preside, and will be supported as usual by several leading Secularists. There ought to be a big rally of the "saints" on this occasion. It will be the first dinner in the new century.

Obituary.

I am sorry to have to announce the death of Mabel Emma, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. Rothera, of Kirkburton, and one time secretary of the Heckmondwike Branch of the N.S.S. The deceased was only six years of age, and her illness was short and sharp. By request of the sorrowing parents I read Colonel Ingersoll's oration at the grave of a little child who died in America. I am sure the sympathy of all old friends in this district will go out to the bereaved family. The funeral took place at the Kirkburton churchyard on Friday, December 14. Her death occurred on December 10. "Flowers fall as well as oaks."—H. Hewson.

Christianity in Japan.

One of the most curious and, in truth, most amazing revolutions in all history is probably the silent revolution that has taken place in Japan in the last thirty or forty years. Without bloodshed, without violence, Japan has, practically speaking, at one bound, jumped from an oriental to an occidental civilisation. Nations have at times developed rapidly, but Japan's development is perhaps the most rapid in human chronicles. It almost presents a new set of human problems in itself. At least, it would appear to quash the sociological theory, sometimes put forward, that it is necessary for a less complex civilisation to pass through every stage which other civilisations have passed through in achieving a more complex form. It is also, of course, in the case of Japan, a change that is not perhaps wholly for the best, or, at any rate, one that has many off-sets. The European has complacently come to regard his own way of living as inherently superior to any other way that can be devised on this planet. In the Transvaal and Phillipine wars we have had it over and over again said and insinuated that nations which do not possess halfpenny newspapers reeling off folly every hour in the day, or acres of factory slums, cannot be as "great" or as "civilised" as the nations which possess these advantages. China to-day is talked of as "barbarous" by the press of some European nations, the bulk of whose inhabitants consist of barbarous mobs, incapable of taking a sane view of their own interests, much less a just view of the interests of other peoples. The fact is, civilisation, in any real meaning of the term, is internal, not external; it is measured in moral and intellectual culture, and consists in raising men rather than bank-balances. A nation may be very rich in credits and be very poor in real happiness. Whether Japan, therefore, in its rapid replacement of the old political and economic machinery by new, has proportionately progressed in moral culture and genuine happiness is open to serious question.

But there is one aspect of Japan's metamorphosis that ought to possess an immense interest for the Christian Churches. If Christianity be radically different and immeasurably superior to all other religions in the world, one would expect to find that Japan, in borrowing so much from Europe, would have readily borrowed the "superior" religion of Europe. If, as is assumed, the Japanese so far progressed in intelligence as to perceive the value of European products and habits, one would have thought they would at once have assimilated that mild and gentle and humane creed which, we are always assured, has made Europe what it is.

The facts, however, are quite otherwise. In a recent number of the *Tablet* there is an article on this subject which is about as doleful reading as the pious readers of that orthodox periodical could well wish. Indeed, the appearance of the article in such a paper is only explicable on the ground that the editors considered good Catholics required an occasional chastening and cooling as a kind of medicine. A quotation is made from a writer in *Illustrated Catholic Missions*, who says:—

> "The upper classes in Japan have, it is true, been Freethinkers for many hundreds of years past, and are likely to remain such for many hundreds of years to come. Their pride of caste, their ancestral code of honor and morals—known as *Bushido*—is, they consider, religion enough for them. But such a code is manifestly unsuited for the common people; and a variety of circumstances has led their superiors to think that they would be the better for a religion of some kind. In the first place, the great change that has come over Japan within the last twenty years has had the usual effect of all great revolutions—it has unhinged men's minds. Strikes have already occurred. Anarchism may come. The new knowledge is bringing with it the spirit of discontent."

We might almost be reading of "superior" Europe. Here, for instance, is the *Tablet's* own summing-up of the state of affairs in Japan:—

> "The old faiths are effete, and have long ceased to be a living force in the national consciousness. Buddhism, undermined by the hopeless immorality of its priesthood, is steadily losing ground, despite efforts to improve its

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organisation, to rehabilitate it in the light of the learning of the West, and to obtain recognition for it as the national creed."*

Change the single word "Buddhism" to "Christianity" in this passage, and it might stand for an accurate description of affairs a good deal nearer home than the Far East. Indeed, one wonders whether the writer, after the fashion of some of the rationalising monks of the Middle Ages, is not having a sly joke at the expense of the ponderous *Tablet*. Against the fact of the decay of the old faiths, the writer in the *Tablet* says that some have favored the introduction of Christianity. Other writers "have recommended Christianity to their compatriots, while themselves believing it a collection of superstitions, and the Marquis Ito is among those who favor its diffusion in Japan." This is rather cold comfort, but there is more of a like kind. The writer in *Illustrated Catholic Missions* points out, lest anyone should carry away too roseate an impression :—

> "The average Japanese believer looks, in fact, on Christianity as an intellectual system or as a system of government, as a form of philosophy or as an instrument of control.....Faith the Japanese Christians ignore altogether. The generality of them join the Church as a man joins a club. The more serious-minded want to discipline their character and to save their country."

The outlook from the general Christian point of view does not thus appear to be positively dazzling; from the particular Catholic point of view the prospect is almost as dull. Here is the picture as painted, let it be remarked, by a Catholic writer in a Catholic journal :—

> "To the acceptance of Catholicism by the educated Japanese there are, on the other hand, two main obstacles: the fear of their ultra-patriotism that the claims of the Papacy should create a division of their allegiance, and the *prejudice aroused by its ritual and ceremonial as having a certain superficial resemblance to those of Buddhism* [italics ours]. To these we may probably add the absence in the average Japanese of a true spiritual sense, capable of appreciating the significance of religion in its higher aspects. But the strongest influence against the Church of Rome is that exerted by Protestant literature, in which it is represented as that of decadent peoples: 'A Japanese who considers himself—as most Japanese do—thoroughly up to date would as soon think of buying an antiquated steam-engine or an antiquated form of bicycle as of embracing Catholicity.....In short, he would not get full value for his money.'"

This confession is amazing in its conscious, or unconscious, revelations. In the first place, the fact is admitted of the resemblance of Roman ritual to other Eastern rituals; and the half-hearted qualification that this resemblance is only "superficial" takes away nothing from the admission. The Japanese evidently do not swallow the diplomatic adjective. Then we have the old wheeze about the absence of a "spiritual sense" in people who disagree with the religionist's dogmas and ceremonies; though the religionist never seems to see that that theory of accounting for religious differences quashes most of the religionist's own theology. And, lastly, we have the confession that the chief source of proselytising weakness in Christianity is to be found in the quarrels of Christians themselves. The Japanese may well ask what marks of "divinity" there are about a religion whose own adherents dispute with one another as bitterly as any of them can dispute with the "heathen." The Japanese, indeed, may with propriety retort on the Christians: "When you have settled among yourselves what your great God-sent religion really means, it will be time enough to come to us with it for acceptance." But there is one further confession in the *Tablet* article, more remarkable even than the others. Says the *Tablet*:—

> "The prospects of the Reformed faiths, which ten years ago were most hopeful, have been undermined by the introduction of the Higher Criticism by some of the clergy themselves. The result is the drift into Agnosticism of a large proportion of the most intelligent converts. Japanese Protestantism is, in fact, 'too broad and too liberal to live. It is not, indeed, properly speaking, a religion at all.' To create a certain number of social centres throughout the country was described as its aim by one of its most distinguished followers, which, he contended, was all it did in Europe. What is known as the 'Doshiba affair' is cited as an instance of the evolution of the gifted and inquisitive Japanese Christian into a Freethinker. The institution was an educational one, created by the American Mission Board, in conjunction with native Christians; but the principle of private judgment was pushed by the Japanese trustees to its logical consequences in the claim to formulate a new religion of their own, from which all the main tenets of Christianity were eliminated."

It would thus appear that, even on the confession of the "enemy," Freethought is advancing in Japan. Indeed, the only consolation the Catholic writer offers to his readers is that, where the prospects of Christianity, as a whole, are rather gloomy, the prospects of Catholicism are somewhat less gloomy than those of its rivals. If there is any hope for any form of Christianity, the writer says, in effect, Catholicism perhaps has the best chance. It is scarcely a prospect to excite unbounded enthusiasm. An infinitely-wise deity seems to be neglecting the interests of his chosen interpreters. It may be the "absence in the average Japanese of a true spiritual sense"—a circumstance which would seem to present an ugly problem for the design-argument people—or it may be the presence in the Japanese of an awkward intelligence which appreciates the fallacies of Christianity at their true value, and unkindly observes the "superficial" resemblance of Christian ceremonials to those they propose to replace; but the fact remains, the Church of Christ makes little or no headway. Nay, its propagators themselves introduce the antidote, and, simultaneously with Christianity, goes the scientific refutation of its absurdities.

The fact is, and the *Tablet* writer consciously or unconsciously reveals it, the real missionary days of Christianity are over. A religion which is rejected in the centres of its historic influence by nine out of ten men of science and culture may possibly still have some future amongst savages, to whom it may in some fashion represent an advance; but it can make no serious headway in a community at anything like a similar level of civilisation to that which is rejecting it in its home. A religion that is not good enough or true enough for the best minds in Europe will scarcely be able to impose itself on the best minds of Asia.

FREDERICK RYAN.

* *Tablet*, November 10, 1900, p. 723.

The Land of Confucius.—III.

(Concluded from page 780.)

THE question may be asked whether or not that people has still a right to live alone; whether or not other civilizations have any right to break down their walls with Christian cannons and march triumphantly over the prejudices and sanctities of years. It is not for a moment contended that the pressure of the outside world upon China has any philanthropic aim; it is not for a moment contended that the aim of the foreign world is to elevate and enlighten China. Let us be honest: the warships of the different nations have gone there simply and solely for the purpose of profit and gain.

As early as the middle of the sixteenth century the Portuguese succeeded in renting a little space in a seaport town. It was not ceded to them; the title was never transferred to them; it remained absolutely in the Chinese Government; but they were permitted to remain and occupy as tenants a little place. From that point of vantage the Portuguese carried on their trade. The Spaniards, eager and adventurous, and seeking likewise to extend their trade, unable to secure even so small a concession from the Imperial Government, established their headquarters in the islands of the Philippine group. The warships that went there more than once in the assumed interest of securing reparation for injuries or insults offered to missionaries, went there really in the interest of the extension of commerce. It happened about thirty years ago that two foreign missionaries from Germany were murdered on Chinese soil. Without warning, without any preliminary, two German warships steamed into one of the Chinese harbors and demanded the place from the commandant in reparation

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for the loss of those two missionaries, and, in addition, the exclusive right of German traders to the commerce of the entire province in which the port was situated. Missionaries come high in China.

That we may understand some of the natural and inevitable prejudices and suspicions that exist in the minds of the Chinese on account of foreign religions, let me cite the massacre that occurred in 1870. In the town of northern China, which has been in the last few months the chief centre of disturbance, French Catholic missionaries had established a convent, and, in connection with it, an orphan asylum and foundling hospital. The missionaries persuaded the natives to bring there, and leave in their charge, young children. It was known that, when they came into the charge of the nuns, all right and title of parent or relative or guardian over the child ceased absolutely.

It was also a part of the policy of the missionaries to persuade the people to bring to them children in the last stages of illness that they might be baptised. This, of course, we understand to have been done with a desire on the part of the missionaries to save the children from the awful fate of dying unbaptised.

The natives were somewhat reluctant to bring their children to the foundling hospital, and the missionaries established a system of rewards, so that anyone bringing a child and giving him to the missionaries received a substantial compensation. The effect of this was to induce kidnapping among the natives, and children were stolen and sold to the nuns. The asylum was surrounded by that secresy and seclusion that everywhere characterise Catholic institutions. Many of the children who were brought there to be baptised in the last stage of illness shortly afterwards would be carried out dead. It is thus easy to see how suspicion and fear arose among the native population. They gathered about the convent and murdered, as before stated, three of the missionaries and twenty-two of the native converts. Can we wonder that that people are unable to understand our ideas? Can we for a moment believe that we shall enlighten and lift them up when the Christendom known to the Chinese observer sends a variety of people all in the name of God, all with the Bible, all with the story of salvation, and yet whose teachings are not only misunderstood by the Chinese, but are irreconcilable among themselves?

Whether or not any people ought to isolate themselves is the question that is foremost now. This question has two distinct and curious aspects. One is whether or not the Chinese people have a right to their own religion. If they have, every missionary is an insolent intruder. The other question is, whether or not the Chinese people have the right to their own commerce, and are under no obligations to exchange commodities or have trade relations with other nations of the world. If they possess that right of isolation and seclusion, then every effort, under whatever guise for the development of commerce, has been an invasion of that right. But it may be questioned whether any nation has the right to remain a hermit, or whether even any man has the right to exclude himself and cut off all relations with his fellow-men. In the case of an individual the right might be conceded, because of the insignificance of the effect that would follow; but has a nation that right? And, if it has not that right, then what is to be the attitude of foreign people towards that once isolated nation?

There is a certain sentiment about history which the race for commercial advantage does not take into account. No thoughtful man can see that ancient people gradually overcome, no thoughtful man can watch the events of the passing day, knowing full well what their final issue must be, without a sense of pity and regret that the doom of the most ancient nation in the world is near at hand. For we must remember that the people of China are not corrupt, effete, nor in the final stages of decay. The Government may be, the officials may be corrupt, but not the people themselves. They could not have sustained themselves through all these centuries if they had been inherently corrupt or depraved. Can we wonder that they refer to all foreigners as "Foreign Devils," and cry out for their expulsion? Does not the Christian world apply the term of opprobrium and contempt to them? We speak of them as "heathen," and "heathen" means, and has always meant on the lips of the Christian, an inferior, a barbarian, a man in darkness, and error and superstition. If we have our Christ, they have their Confucius; if the glory of our Christ was that he gave us the Golden Rule, their prophet uttered it five hundred years before Christ was born; if we boast about Christian institutions and civilisation, and parade our love for our fellow-men, and our desire to extend our benign and enlightening influences over all the world, they can point to the legislation of the American Congress that forbade a Chinaman to visit this country. The events that are transpiring now have within them possible issues that no man is wise enough to discern or foretell. Of one thing there seems to be sufficient ground for certainty; and that is that the time of Chinese isolation is drawing to its end. With the French on the south, the Germans on the east, the Japanese power rising not far from its shores, Russia on the north, and England trying to get everywhere, it may be doubted if that old people can long continue its policy of exclusion.

After the brilliant and astounding victory of the Japanese over China in their recent war, the two Governments agreed upon the terms of a treaty by which certain important territorial concessions were to be made to Japan, together with the payment of an indemnity fund of one hundred and sixty millions of dollars. Before the ratification of that treaty could be made by the respective Governments, the omnipotent hand of Russia was seen. Her representatives succeeded in persuading both the Chinese and the Japanese Governments to a modification of the treaty, whereby, instead of the concession of the north being made to Japan, it was made to Russia, in lieu of which an increased indemnity of thirty millions of dollars was to be paid by China to Japan. Associated with Russia in this scheme—which was not known outside of secret diplomatic circles for nearly two years after its consummation—were Germany and France. England was left out of the compact. As an equivalent in part for this exclusion of England, she sought to compel what is known as the "open door" policy; which simply means that, in each port where treaty rights were granted to any one nation of the first class, equal and identical rights should also be accorded to every other nation of the first class. In this England was unsuccessful. The situation is now this: an ancient people numbering more than one-third of the population of the globe, so situated territorially with reference to Russia as that the natural order would bring Russia as the conqueror. The contiguity, the neighborship of these two most powerful nations, renders more than possible the adoption and assimilation by each other of their respective ideas and institutions. In many respects the Russian and Chinese character are alike. Both are adroit, patient, watchful, disingenuous, conservative, and far-sighted. The diplomacy of the western nations is more direct—up and down, blunt, straightforward, and ingenuous; that of the Orient, as that of the Czar, is more disingenuous and cunning. Russia has already succeeded in bringing about a sort of commercial need between the two countries. The great Trans-Siberian railway has within it the possibility of changing the map of the world. What may be the result? If China and Russia were to unite; if the patient conservative millions of China were to be given the stimulus of a strong will, able commanders, and competent leaders; if the millions upon millions of that people were to be organised into a military force, it is a safe statement that the two united nations could dominate the world. Who may know the future? With far-sighted policy, with great adroitness, and with a hidden hand, the Power from the north is bearing down upon the ancient Power of the south. The history of the world may be changed, and the destiny of nations turned aside. In this hour of the uncertainty, of the hesitancy; in this hour of diplomacy; in this hour, when vast possibilities lie in germ, there lie upon every man and every woman two obligations—one is to be so far intelligent, to be so far posted, to come so far into acquaintance with the tradition and the history of that vast people, as to be able to look upon any question without prejudice, to view even the atrocities and the outrages—even the murders and the massacres, even the plots and the intrigues in the land beyond the sea—from a view-point, not of prejudice, but with a desire to

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understand the causes, and find, if possible, where rests the blame.

We should have been indignant to a man if, a few years ago, when in the streets of New Orleans a mob set upon and murdered some Italians, the entire people of the United States, the Government of Washington and Lincoln, had been held responsible for the outrage; and yet in our haste, in our frenzy, in our narrow prejudice, we think all the Chinese Empire is responsible for the attacks upon the missionaries, and we think of that ancient people as being simply a conglomerate mass of house-servants, cooks, and laundry-men. Let us know that they had arts and sciences of no inconsiderable degree centuries in advance of the rest of the world; they understood the manufacture and use for amusement and scientific purposes of gunpowder; they understood the manufacture and use of the mariner's compass, and of fine fabrics, centuries before the rest of the world found them out. When Gutenburg placed the marvel of movable type upon the table, it was afterwards discovered that the Chinese had been making paper and printing upon it with movable type for hundreds and hundreds of years. To know these things, to feel a sympathy for a great people, to have some higher ambition than that of the sordid desire for markets and the enlargement of commerce, to fix in the minds of the people the sense of human brotherhood, to decline the feeling of superiority that awakens prejudice, suspicion, and hatred, to recognise that they with us, blind and ignorant, stand before the enigma of human life and destiny; that they, with us, are seeking to find the higher ideals, to exemplify the higher principles of morality and the gentler manners that ought to mark civilisation; to believe that they may help us as well as we them; to set the seal of our disapproval upon fanatical religion, and to look upon all the world as the dwelling-place of men, having natural rights and common needs—these things constitute the obligation we owe to the old world. In the great future, when the map of the world is changed, when the lines of demarcation that separate peoples are less and less observed, when caste and race prejudice have been overcome, when men everywhere are great enough to understand that every other man is great in some degree, that all are children of the great parent nature, that all face towards the mysterious and the unknown, perhaps it will then be seen that kindness and sympathetic understanding were better and more powerful instruments than bayonets or shotted guns.

If I may have created in the mind of any man or any woman a throb of sympathy, a desire for understanding of that ancient and wondrous people, then these humble words of mine are not spoken in vain.

(Dr.) J. E. Roberts.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Correspondence.

JOSEPHUS AND JESUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—I regret if my query was cast in such a form as to lead Mr. Watts to suppose that I questioned his views, and thus induced him to devote the greater part of his article on "Josephus and Christ" to the discussion of matters I never raised. Also I regret that he had *originally* no intention of noticing my criticism, for it is a point of the utmost importance to the Secularist, for the three passages of Josephus are part of the Christian line of defence, and it is useless to attack *one* without disposing of the other *two*. Mr. Watts complains that I have not directed my attention sufficiently to the literature; but, if I had, there would be no necessity for me to study the *Freethinker*, or to read Mr. Watts's interesting and improving articles. It is precisely unlearned persons like myself who rely upon the guidance of Mr. Watts in these subjects. Mr. Watts says that, if the passages in Josephus referring to James and John are genuine, they would not be personal evidence in favor of the events recorded, but only hearsay. I do not understand this argument, because Josephus tells us a good deal about Herod the Great which certainly is not *personal* evidence, but only hearsay. Am I, therefore, to understand that Mr. Watts is of opinion that Herod the Great never existed because Josephus had no personal acquaintance with him? Renan says, in his introduction to his *Life of Jesus*: "Josephus, writing especially for pagans, is not so candid. His short notices of Jesus, of John the Baptist, of Judas the Gaulonite, are dry and colorless. I believe the passage respecting Jesus to be authentic. It is perfectly in the style of Josephus, and, if this historian has made mention of Jesus, it is thus that he must have spoken of him. We feel only that a Christian hand has retouched the passage." It will not be denied that the opinion of Renan is as good as the opinion of Mr. Watts. Meredith's argument that Herod would not have sent John the Baptist to Machærus is absurd. Josephus expressly implies that the execution of the Baptist took place before the quarrel with Aretas, and it would be most clever policy to remove a dangerous subject to a border castle under the authority of Herod's father-in-law, where the offender could be quietly disposed of without exciting a popular tumult. The argument that Josephus ought to have mentioned the *sect* of John the Baptist is also silly, for Josephus was not writing a history of Jewish sects, and there is no evidence that the Baptist had any numerous sect of followers. Also, Josephus cannot be expected to notice every little event of his time, and we should have had no reference to the Baptist at all if it had not been for the war with Aretas. In the new *Secular Almanack* Mr. Chilperic Edwards argues that the paragraph in Josephus relating to the Baptist is an interpolation because it interrupts the thread of the story; but even *he* has nothing to say of the passage about James the Just, for this latter passage cannot be separated from the context in which it stands. The quotation from Judge Strange is unintelligible to me, because I never met with the slightest evidence that the James passage ever stood verbatim in the *Wars* instead of the *Antiquities*, where we now have it. Also, Mr. Watts says Origen proves nothing in favor of my contention; but surely his learning in the literature bearing upon this subject would enable him to see the point intended. The argument against the Jesus passage is that, though Origen, in mentioning the works of Josephus, expressly says that he did not receive Jesus for Christ, yet Eusebius, a hundred years later, quotes the Jesus passage as we have it. So that it is considered probable that Eusebius himself forged this passage, which did not exist in the book in Origen's time. But this argument will not apply to the Baptist passage or the James passage, because these already existed in the time of Origen, and are quoted by him. Therefore, I repeat that the allusions of Josephus to the Baptist and to James require to be disposed of just as much as the Jesus paragraph. As Renan says, they are precisely in the style of Josephus; and, if he mentioned these characters at all, it is precisely in this way that he might be expected to mention them. As the case stands at present, it looks very much as though these passages were objected to simply because their testimony happens to be inconvenient.

Chrystabel Vaughan.

THE DOGMA OF THE TRINITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—It is most disheartening, when you have for upwards of twenty-five years been endeavoring to enlighten the world, to find the same errors and misconceptions repeated and put forth as something new. In my *Secret Societies*, first published in 1875, and republished in 1897 in an enlarged edition—or, rather, in an almost entirely new work—I have fully expounded, in the Introduction and other parts of the book, the origin of the dogma of the Trinity, not as having come to us from this or that nation, but as being coeval with Nature herself, from which it is derived, since in Nature there is no act or fact which does not imply a trinity. This very letter to you is a proof thereof. I, the writer, as the Father, produce my Son, the letter; whilst the act of my writing it is the Spirit. Hence all nations have had their trinities, from China to Peru, as we know from monuments or tradition. And yet almost week after week I must read in the *Freethinker* vain speculations on the possible origin of this dogma—speculations which only skim the surface; whilst its origin must be sought for in the deepest ground of universal nature, existing therein before priestly cunning distorted it for its own selfish objects. When will the world learn to appreciate truth? It readily enough swallows Darwin's warmed-up cabbage of protoplasm, but the Trinity must have a divine origin!

C. W. Heckethorn.

A converted Western real estate agent was "called" and went to preaching. An old-time friend of his went over into the rival town, "within convenient hailing distance," to hear him preach. When asked how he liked the sermon, he said: "Sermon, nothing; he's at his old tricks again, booming an addition he calls Paradise. Says it's going to be laid out with golden streets, and all that kind of rot."—*Printer's Ink.*

An old darky rose recently in a southern prayer meeting and exclaimed: "Brethren and sistern, I've been having a dreffful time since last we met together. I've been chawing hard bones and swallowing bitter pills; I'm afraid I've broken everyone of the Ten Commandments, but, thank the Lord, I haven't lost my religion!'

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Charles Watts, "Will Christianity Survive the Twentieth Century?"

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, A lecture.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Christmas Festival.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Mr. Edwards, "Christmas."

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall); 6.30, A. Gall, "Spiritualism."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, H. P. Ward, "Baby Jesus." Also in the Bull Ring in the morning, if fine, at 11, a lecture.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Stanley Jones, "Civilisations and their Destinies."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Business meeting; G. Faulkner, "The Vedas or Sacred Books of the Brahmins"; 6.30, Children's Party.

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, J.W. Bailey, "Mr. N. B. Billany—A Recollection."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Vocal and Instrumental Concert—arranged by Mr. Johnson Lowe.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Hall closed. New Year's Day Annual Soirée—Tea at 5.30, to be followed by entertainment; dancing at 8.

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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 52. SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1900. PRICE TWOPENCE.

Mr. Holyoake's Backers.

SOME weeks ago—it was in the *Freethinker* of October 21—I wrote an article on Mr. G. J. Holyoake's new attitude towards Atheism and Agnosticism. During the most vigorous part of his life he professed himself an Atheist, but in his old age he prefers to call himself an Agnostic. Now this is a change that might be allowed to pass unchallenged, if it were not made the occasion of an attack on others who elect to remain under the old flag. Old age is entitled to comforts, or at least to shelter from hardships; and if a veteran of over eighty finds any advantage or convenience in adopting a more tolerable designation, without any actual renunciation of principle, it is only a curmudgeon that would deny him the luxury. But when we are practically asked to share it with him we have the right to make an open refusal. When the fox, in the old story, lost his tail, and then tried to persuade his brethren that they would look much handsomer if they dispensed with theirs, it was time to tell him that the appendages were both ornamental and useful. If "Atheist" is in Mr. Holyoake's way, by all means let him get rid of it. But when he advances a reason why others should follow his example, it is permissible to tell him that his reason is insufficient. Mr. Holyoake's reason is this—in brief. Theism says there is a God, Atheism says there is no God, and Agnosticism says it does not know. Agnosticism, therefore, is modest and accurate; it does not dogmatise, and it keeps within the limit of its information. Such is Mr. Holyoake's argument, and his conclusion would be sound enough if his premises were not faulty. But they *are* faulty. Mr. Holyoake declared that Atheists, like Theists, had "no doubt that they knew the solution" of the "mighty problem of the cause of eternity." "Well," I said in reply, "I beg to tell him that I am acquainted with at least one Atheist who does not affect to know this 'solution.' To him it is—as Hamlet says—words, words, words! I will go further," I added, "and ask Mr. Holyoake to refer me to one Atheist who *denies* the existence of God." Atheists may, just like Agnostics, deny the existence of this or that God. It all depends on definitions. Twenty-three years ago, in criticising a book by Professor Flint, I wrote as follows:—

> "There be Gods many and Lords many; which of the long theological list is to be selected as *the* God? A God, like everything else from the heights to the depths, can be known only by his attributes; and what the Atheist does is not to argue against the existence of *any* God, which would be sheer lunacy, but to take the attributes affirmed by Theism as composing its Deity, and to inquire whether they are compatible with each other and with the facts of life. Finding that they are not, the Atheist simply sets Theism aside as not proven, and goes on his way without further afflicting himself with such abstruse questions."

This is precisely the position I took in replying to Mr. Holyoake a few weeks ago, and it is the position of all the Atheists I know or have ever known. Moreover, it was, as far as I understood him, the position of Mr. Holyoake himself while he called himself an Atheist. During his debate with Mr. Bradlaugh, some thirty years ago, it was admitted that both were Atheists; the question in dispute was whether Atheism was involved in Secularism. I do not recollect that there was so much as a suggestion that a difference existed between them as to the meaning of Atheism. Their difference was over the meaning of Secularism.

I am well aware that persons of a metaphysical turn of mind, and a good knowledge of the dictionary, can argue with each other on all sorts of subjects, and keep it up till death or the day of judgment. But the trouble comes when they have to meet the practical man, the average man, the man in the street. He has his living to get, and lots of things to attend to; so, instead of beating about the bush, he goes straight to what seems to him to be the kernel of the question—the real point at issue. He may be mistaken, of course; but that is his method, and you will never wean him from it. All the "revelations" in the world have been got up for him. It was found that no impression was made upon him by Platonic or other long-winded ratiocinations. So speculation was presented to him as fact, and fancy as history; and in that way he was nobbled, because he did not perceive the cheating—though he is beginning to see it now. Well then, let an Atheist and an Agnostic stand together before this gentleman; and what difference will he discover between them? "Have you got a God?" he asks in his blunt way. The Atheist plainly answers "No." The Agnostic hums and ha's. "Come now, straight," says the questioner, "have you got a God?" The Agnostic says: "Well, I ——." "Here, that'll do," says the man in the street, "I see you haven't got one. You're just like the other fellow, only he's straighter." And really that practical man, that average man, that man in the street, is right. He has got hold of the substance. All else is shadow. You have a God, or you have not. There is really no intermediate position. If you have a God, you are a Theist; if you have no God, you are an Atheist. Let your reasons be few or many, plain or subtle, this is what it comes to at the finish. "I am the Lord thy God," cries some Deity or other through the mouth of a priest. "Not mine," says the Atheist. "Not precisely mine," says the Agnostic, "at least at present; these things require a great deal of consideration; but I promise to keep an open mind." Now if the offended Deity were to box the ears of one of them, which do you think it would be? I fancy it would be the Agnostic, for all his "reverence."

Mr. Holyoake's new attitude is likely to procure him fresh friends in the fold of faith—which he will probably not find annoying. One has already announced himself in the *Church Gazette*, and this is what he says:—

> "One is glad to see that Mr. Holyoake has renounced the title of 'Atheist' in favor of that of 'Agnostic.' The *Freethinker* deprecates his going so on the ground that the two terms imply exactly the same thing. We cannot admit that they do. An 'Atheist' properly means a person who positively denies the existence of a God, while an 'Agnostic' is simply one who does not know, but who very often is strongly inclined to believe in a Deity. Between these attitudes there lies a vast interval. The first is as dogmatic as that of a Cardinal; the second is philosophical, and of one who adopts it there is always a good deal of hope."

Without inquiring what right the *Church Gazette* has to define "Atheism" for Atheists, we may observe how consoling it must be to Mr. Holyoake to be told by a Christian that he is "philosophical," that there is "a vast interval" between himself and a wicked, dogmatic Atheist, and that there is "a good deal of hope" for him! Our own criticism is nothing to this. The orthodox editor greets Mr. Holyoake's one leg over the fence, and "hopes" for his whole body in time. One

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shudders to think of what Mr. Price Hughes may say when he finds an opportunity.

A suggestion has more than once been made that men over eighty should be compelled to "rest and be thankful." Generally speaking, they might be kept from public utterances with advantage to themselves and others. No one can be original at that age—and an effort to be so is sure to end in disaster. At the best there is only a repetition of what has been better said before; at the worst there may be the sad unsaying of former virile utterances, and the frittering away of a brave reputation. This thought was present to the mind of Renan in closing his delightful *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*. "I should be grieved," he wrote, "to go through one of those periods of enfeeblement in which the man who has had strength and virtue is no more than the shadow and ruin of himself, and often, to the great joy of fools, occupies himself in demolishing the life he has laboriously built up. Such an old age is the worst gift the gods could give a man. If such a fate is reserved for me, I protest in advance against the weaknesses that a softened brain may make me say or sign." It is too late for Mr. Holyoake to protest in advance, but we may protest for him. It is the former Mr. Holyoake we shall all care to remember with pride and gratitude; the bold clear thinker, the lucid writer, the publicist who pressed new and valuable ideas upon the attention of the world.

G. W. Foote.

What of the New Century?

In my article last week attention was drawn to the condition of the Church at the close of the nineteenth century. It was there shown that, while the secular progress of the people during the last hundred years had been great, the Church had been a decided failure as a reforming agency. It had either remained dormant or had exercised its power against the reforming tendencies of the age, while a healthy activity had been manifested in science, philosophy, and literature, and upon political and social questions. It is now proposed to consider what are the probabilities of the twentieth century, not only in reference to the Church, but also in regard to the secular and general status of society. Have we sufficient reason for believing that the advancement already made will continue? Is it likely that Christianity will be still further modified to meet the improved requirements of the new century? Will the Church once more change its policy so as to retain its existence among our institutions? My answer to these questions is in the affirmative. The great American orator, Patrick Henry, once said: "I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, that is the lamp of experience. I know of no better way of judging of the future than by the past." I therefore base my opinion of the future upon the experience of the past. The lesson of all history is that man is a progressive being. His watchword has been, and doubtless will continue to be, "Onward and onward still." With the impetus given by our steady advance, with the growing momentum of our enlarging opportunities and accelerating speed, it is reasonable to suppose that our progress in the future will be yet more rapid and irresistible.

Let us, in the first place, look at the history of Christianity. From its very inception its record has been one of change and re-adaptation. And we have no adequate reason for supposing that it will be different in the future. On the contrary, from the very nature of the faith it is only legitimate to believe that its mutations will go on. The term "Christianity" does not represent one fixed and consistent faith, but rather a system based upon contradictory and incoherent teachings, which are interpreted in various ways according to the notions of its different believers. It is no use urging that Christianity is Christology, for that does not remove the difficulty. The Rev. Peter Dean put this point very clearly when, in his paper read before the London Ministers' Conference, he said:—

> "The Christ of everyone, the Christ of every *Church*, the Christ of every *Sect*, the Christ of every *Man*, is a different Christ; how, then, is it possible for any to know which is the true Christ—what is Christianity? Maybe we are told that by searching the New Testament the true Christology, the true Christianity, is to be found. Well, some of us have done this, and we have found not one, but six or seven, different and irreconcilable Christs or Christologies there. There is the Christology of Christ's contemporaries; the Christology of the First and Third Gospels; the Christology of the Epistles of *Peter*, *James*, and *Jude*; the Christology of Paul's Epistles; and the Christology of the Johannic writings—and they are all different. They cannot *all* be true; *which* is the true one? I reply that it is utterly impossible for us to know."

This has long been the Secular view as to the diverse character of the Christian religion, and now it is pleasing to find that view corroborated by one of its firm adherents. It requires no great prophetic power to foresee that in the new century, while possibly the name "Christianity" may be retained, the teachings of the New Testament will be found more than ever incompatible with human progress, and thoroughly incapable of furnishing a code of morals by which all succeeding generations would be governed, and to which the great intellects of the world would finally succumb.

As with Christianity, so with the Church, it is not at all probable that either will be entirely destroyed in the twentieth century; there are too many personal interests involved in both to allow us to expect such a consummation. The improvement will be in re-establishing the two upon a broad and secular basis. In the Christian faith the natural will take the place of the supposed supernatural; and the Churches will become institutions for the inculcation of the practical duties of daily life. For the worship of the Christian's God will be substituted the endeavor to improve the condition of man; and, instead of wasting time in vain efforts to prepare for an imaginary future, more attention will be given to consolidate the endeavors to enhance the value of the present. There is much truth in the statement of the Rev. G. F. Terry that—

> "The great problem which confronts the religious world of to-day may be briefly stated thus: How shall the Church preserve her own past, and yet, at the same time, meet the wants of the present? How can she hold the faith delivered to the saints of bygone ages, and, at the same time, find room for the faith delivered to the saints of to-day? We feel that the two contrary elements of fixity and change must be harmonised in order to fit the religion of Jesus for future needs. How this is to be done is not yet apparent. Of one thing only can we be certain—that history and not authority, fact and not fiction, will determine the form of Christianity in the future."*

True, it is not "yet apparent" how the progressive spirit of the age can be made to harmonise with a faith that enjoins the regulation of human affairs by rules which were fixed two thousand years ago. Professor Huxley pictured a model Church of the future when he said:—

> "I can conceive of the existence of an established Church which should be a blessing to the community; a Church in which, week by week, services should be devoted, not to the iteration of abstract propositions in theology, but to the setting before men's minds of an ideal of true, just, and pure living; a place in which those who are weary of the burden of daily cares should find a moment's rest in the contemplation of the higher life, which is possible for all, though attained by so few; a place in which the man of strife and of business should have time to think how small, after all, are the rewards he covets compared with peace and charity. Depend upon it, if such a Church existed, no one would seek to disestablish it."

In spite of the desperate efforts now being made by the various Churches to extend their propaganda in the twentieth century, there are ample grounds for believing that during the next hundred years Secular Freethought will win many more solid triumphs over the Church. In the first place, there is the unmistakable fact of the secularisation of our modern public life. Orthodox Christians misrepresent the philosophy of the age, because they have been trained from infancy to attribute all things whatever to a being external to themselves. But the present age is more practical than any preceding one; its energies are directed towards its own improvement. Scientific research is unfettered

* *Church Gazette*, November 25.

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by theology, and the practical ethics of modern society are utilitarian. Thus, as the result of persistent Freethought advocacy, we can congratulate ourselves upon having achieved many important triumphs. We have a freedom of speech unknown in Christian times. The press is more liberal than it ever was. Education is becoming more secular every year, and orthodox persecution dare not manifest itself as it did in the past. Hell is shut up, and the devil is practically dead, whilst the Churches have left their old moorings and are seeking to adapt their teachings to the secular requirements of the age.

In the second place, our hopes for a brighter future are based upon the fact that knowledge is to-day diffused over a larger surface in society than it ever has been before, and that science has made more real progress in the last half-century than in all the previous ages. True it is, knowledge is power, and the proper application of it is the foundation of all permanent advancement. Books are brilliant stars in the intellectual hemisphere, and their value must not be underrated nor their advantages neglected. Mind receives its necessary pabulum by communing with mind, and this it can do more easily and more perfectly in books than perhaps anywhere else. Hence they are the most powerful agents in mental development. Someone has curiously described a book as a brain preserved in ink—not a bad description, remembering that the mightiest thoughts of the mightiest brains are there preserved. Almost the entire earth has been converted into a huge observatory and laboratory for man, in almost every part of which he is found working daily in comparing results and communicating knowledge. Could the great men of the past who devoted themselves to physical science—foremost amongst whom was Aristotle—rise from their graves, and catch a glimpse of the present state of things, how, after the first feeling of surprise was over, would their hearts be gladdened by the spectacle they would then behold! Astronomical, geological, physiological, and chemical discoveries, throwing all the science of the past into the shade, form the heritage of the poorest and most insignificant of mankind. True, the great problem of life is yet unsolved, and a score of metaphysical questions still remain unanswered; but in physical science the discoveries that have been made and the improvements that have taken place are startling even to contemplate. In all that concerns the practical, in all that has to do with the subjugation of natural forces and the direction of the laws of the universe to new issues conducing to the happiness of man, modern progress has been rapid almost beyond conception.

In taking leave of the nineteenth century, we must all acknowledge the valuable legacy of thought and practical results for good that it has left us, and we most heartily hail its successor with the belief and the hope that during its reign the seeds which have been sown may yield a prolific and much-desired harvest.

CHARLES WATTS.

The New Birth.

"Every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this grey spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star."—*Ulysses.*

PIETISTS, though they have invented the term, are not the only people who are "born again." The new birth is a human experience which is not necessarily confined to the acquisition or awakening of religious faith. It may as easily represent the adoption of the far nobler principles of Freethought and the unpinioned flight for the fuller knowledge which lies outside the creeds. A man may be "born again" by the final rejection of all distinctively theological teaching.

That has been the experience of most of us. Few have been Freethinkers all their lives. In babyhood we have been mostly believers. Children are credulous. They believe, in their innocence and guilelessness, whatever they are told. Religion in its concrete form presents no difficulties to their minds, because pretty fairy stories and narratives of the doings of grim goblins and Jack-the-Giant-Killers and Jack-on-the-Beanstalks are usually their relaxation from words of two syllables and the multiplication table. Happy are we if, in maturer years, we do not present ourselves as examples of that inherited slavery which is described in Dryden's couplet:—

The priest continues what the nurse began,
And thus the child imposes on the man.

At some period or other of our existence there comes an awakening. As we have discarded the fairy and goblin stories of infantile life, we are impelled in later years to disavow acceptance of priestly stories which are equally ridiculous. We throw off the thraldom of priest and book, of theological dogma, creed and vain conjecture. We determine to follow knowledge whithersoever it may lead, and without regard to priestly-pictured consequences.

With many the process has been slow and gradual. There may have been much hesitation and some heart-burning. It suits the gaseous "evidential missioner" and others of his tribe to draw terrible pictures of the distracted or despondent condition of the doubter and sceptic when on the point of renouncing his belief in Christianity—which religion, after all, is but one faith amongst many, and is not accepted by the bulk of the inhabitants of the globe. Terrible mental writhings take place, according to their accounts, with tears and goodness knows what. But it will be usually found that the hesitation and heart-burnings have no relation to the rotten creed under consideration, but to the pain that may possibly be given to pious relatives. Why should a man, apart from the natural reluctance to give offence to his kith and kin, trouble himself about following his new knowledge, though it may lead him, as a falling star or a fire in a great city, far beyond the point he feels at first disposed to travel?

To many, in consequence of the gradual process previously spoken of, it is hardly possible to look back and fix the precise period when emancipation actually took place. But there generally remains some recollection of the point at which the last shred of the "old clo'" was cast aside. That, for all biographical or obituary purposes, may be regarded as the date of our "new birth"—the beginning of the brighter and better existence; brighter because we have emerged from the gloomy mists and deadly miasma of Superstition, and better because we are imbued with truer principles and higher and more practicable aims.

The new birth brings with it new responsibilities. In so far as we find it accompanied by increased mental light and greater moral strength for ourselves, it devolves upon us to endeavor to place these advantages within the reach of others. The newly-born Freethinker *must* become, in some way or another, a propagandist of the principles of his Freethought. There can be no shirking of this duty. He owes it to himself and his fellows. As he must have been, to a more or less extent, indebted to others who have preceded him for the light and freedom he has gained, the only means of repayment possible to him consists in communicating his knowledge to those around him, and in doing his best to transmit it to those who may follow him.

All true Freethinkers are actuated to this work not so much by a sense of duty as by a generous impulse, which does not permit of a selfish "storing and hoarding" of the truth. Self-sacrifice, and a solicitude for others, is one of the first great lessons which come with the "new birth" into Freethought.

In what way those who have been "born again," recently or aforetime, may assist in the work of enlightenment is a matter which must be left to individual taste and capability. Every Freethinker has it in his power to do something—in his own personal circle, or in connection with the established organisations of Freethought. No one is so circumstanced as to be unable to assist in the ultimate triumph of his own views. There are many methods which will readily suggest themselves. The literature and lectures of the movement naturally require to be supported. There are numerous ways in which that may be done. Privately, the influence of personal character and advocacy may be made productive of invaluable results.

The central organisations of the party are now placed

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upon a firmer and more workable and hopeful basis than ever they were before. The machinery is so far complete that the co-operation of every class of worker willing to assist is fully provided for, and confidently—and, indeed, earnestly—invited.

Now is especially the time when Freethinkers should gird themselves up to redoubled efforts. The new era should be marked by unexampled enthusiasm and activity. The next few months should see the sphere of operations largely extended and an endeavor made to cope still more courageously with the task before us. The Freethought party generally, as well as Freethinkers individually, should rejoice in the "new birth," which may be fittingly celebrated at the commencement of the new century.

Let no one suppose that past achievements and our present position render further exertion less urgently necessary than at the beginning of the century now closing. Much undoubtedly has been done, but much more remains to be done. There is a natural tendency amongst Freethinkers—it may be from constant association with each other, or from the reading of the extensive supply of literature of a Freethought type which has of late years sprung up—to imagine that the world, if not actually converted to their views, is in a fair way of becoming so in time.

Yes, in time—but when? That time, if efforts are suspended or relaxed, may, and no doubt will, be in a very far-off future. The forces of sacerdotalism and superstition have reorganised themselves. With the wisdom of the serpent, they have abandoned much that would have inevitably ensured their destruction if retained. They have adopted new tactics, and have changed their ground. Under these altered conditions they have still to be met. They, too, have undergone the 'new birth," though a great deal of the old Adam yet remains in them—quite enough to make things very uncomfortable for Freethinkers if Freethinkers should become indolent and supine.

Let us rejoice in our individual "new births," and commence the new century with "thank-offerings"—to use the phraseology of the churches—which will indicate our *real* interest in Freethought and our desire for the advancement of new and *sane* ideas.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Christianity and Civilisation.—V.

THE POSITION OF WOMAN.

(Continued from page 805.)

THERE were three main causes that contributed to the formation of the patristic view of marriage. First, there was the celibacy of Jesus; second, the explicit teaching of Paul that the celibate state was most desirable, since it left man free to attend to the works of God; and, third, the assumed necessity of mortifying the natural passions by shunning all forms of earthly enjoyment. I may dwell later upon some of the extravagances to which this last cause led, but at present we are concerned only with its influence in determining the Christian treatment of women. The first sign of the feeling against marriage is seen in the ignoring of the element of companionship or idealism, and restricting it to the single function of perpetuating the race. But matters did not rest very long at this stage; and it is not long before the close of the second century when we find even this allowance brushed on one side. "The patriarchs," it was said, "had reason to see to the multiplication of their posterity; the world was young then; now, on the contrary, all things are declining and drawing to their close." Children were burdens to those seeking to lead a devout life, since they drew them back to the world from which they were seeking to cut themselves adrift. Besides, the end of the world was expected, and what was the use of replenishing a world that was soon to come to a close.

If marriage was permitted, it was only because some concession had to be made to human weakness and sinfulness; but it was, said Jerome, their aim to "cut down by the axe of virginity the wood of marriage." Marriage, he goes on to say, "is, at the best, a vice; all that we can do is to excuse and purify it." Tertullian asserts that celibacy has to be chosen, even though the human race perish in consequence. Augustine said that "celibates will shine in heaven like dazzling stars, while the parents who begot them will resemble stars without light." Saturnius, one of the leaders of the Gnostics, taught that "marriage having been instituted by the powers of darkness, for the purpose of perpetuating the race of their partisans, it was the duty of men, endowed with a ray of divine light, to prevent both the diffusion of this germ of celestial being and the propagation of so imperfect an order of things."* Origen, one of the greatest of the Christian writers, declared that all marriage was unclean; and, taking Matthew xix. 12 as his warranty, mutilated himself in order to avoid all temptation. "An obscene sect, under the name of Valesians, undertook to follow his example, and to procure proselytes by force among those unhappy enough to fall into their hands; while in the canons of the succeeding century the repeated prohibition of the practice of self-mutilation shows how difficult it was to eradicate the belief that self-immolation was an acceptable offering to a beneficent creator.....Pope Sixtus II. did not hesitate to openly advocate the practice."†

The subject is far too unsavory to be pursued at any great length, although it casts a flood of light upon the general conduct of the early Christians, and particularly upon its influence on the position of women. We need only reflect that the views I have indicated above were held by the leaders of Christian society to understand how wide of the truth is the oft-repeated statement that Christianity elevated woman and purified the family. On the contrary, it came near extinguishing the family altogether. The development of asceticism, which took thousands of men and women out of their ordinary walks of life into the deserts, where they spent their time fasting and praying, naturally led to a severance of marital and domestic relationships. The lives of the saints furnish us with numerous instances of husbands forsaking wives, wives leaving husbands, parents leaving children, and children leaving parents, in order to practise the ascetic life. And this not against the teachings of their religious leaders, but as the consequence of their holding up the celibate life as the true Christian ideal.‡ A great many of the "saints" refused to hold converse with women under any condition; and their degree of excellence was estimated by the number of years they had kept aloof from such an abominable creature. So far did the horror of marriage carry believers that Eustathius, bishop of Sebastia, in Cappadocia, announced, as an article of faith, that married people were outside the pale of salvation, and forbade the offering of prayers in houses occupied by them.§ Marriage was so far considered unclean that "married persons were asked to abstain from cohabitation three days before the Communion and forty days after Easter." Later, marriage was forbidden altogether during Lent, and at so many other seasons that one writer remarks: "There were but few days and weeks during which people could get married at all."

Little wonder, then, with these views in the ascendant, that the social position of women rapidly declined under Christian auspices. Throughout all the laws that were called into being under Christian rule the subordination of the female sex is either asserted or assumed. Her right to own property in the married state was taken from her, as well as the right to inherit equally with brothers; the property went, as the Church law phrased it, "to the worthiest of blood"—the male. Blackstone admits that this was a distinction unknown to the old Roman law; while scarce a generation has passed since, after a hard fight, woman, in the respect of holding property in the married state, was recognised by the law of England as a human being. As she was prohibited from preaching, her education was of the scantiest and poorest description. Of the general influence of Canon (*i.e.*, Church) law on the position of women, Lecky says:—

> "In the whole feudal legislation women were placed in a much lower legal position than in the Pagan Empire.

* Wake, *Marriage and Kinship*, p. 460.

† Lea, *Sacr. Cel.*, pp. 38-9.

‡ Those who wish for special cases will find numerous instances that have been collected by Lea and Lecky in the works I have already quoted from.

§ Lea, p. 61.

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> In addition to the personal restrictions which grew necessarily out of the Catholic doctrines concerning divorce, and concerning the subordination of the weaker sex, we find numerous and stringent enactments, which rendered it impossible for women to succeed to any considerable amount of property, and which almost reduced them to the alternative of marriage or a nunnery. The complete inferiority of the sex was continually maintained by the law.....Wherever the Canon law has been made the basis of legislation, we find laws of succession sacrificing the interests of daughters and of wives; and a state of public opinion which has been formed and regulated by these laws; nor was any serious attempt made to abolish them until the close of the last century."*

Under Canon law a woman could not bring an accusation against a man save for a case of personal injury; nor could she appear as witness in any criminal suit, nor attest a will "As late as the thirteenth century the Church courts in England ruled that a husband could transfer his wife to another man for a period determinable at the recipient's pleasure."† The punishment for a wife who killed her husband was, in feudal England, to be drawn and burned; for a husband who killed a wife, hanging only. Woman was not only treated when married as an article of property; it was even questioned if she were a human being. The Church Council of Macon discussed with extreme gravity the question, "Whether women were human beings?" and only decided in the affirmative after a long debate—a thesis that was revived as late as the sixteenth century by one Simon Geddicus, a doctor in divinity, and which seems to have led to some considerable discussion.‡ When we note, among other results of Christian legislation, that by an Act of Parliament under Henry VIII. women, with day laborers, and others of "low estate," were prohibited from reading the New Testament; that under feudal legislation the Lord of the Manor could compel any boy of fourteen years of age and any girl of twelve to marry; that until the time of Elizabeth women were denied benefit of clergy, and until Charles II.'s reign both civil and common law allowed husbands to beat their wives whenever they thought they deserved it, it is plain what kind of an influence Christian beliefs had exerted on the liberal tendencies that existed in the Pagan Empire.

There are two other results of the Christian treatment of women that I have only time to touch on in the very briefest manner. The first was the almost unbridled immorality that characterises the ages during which ascetic and monastic views predominated. As early as 370 A.D. the Emperor Valentinian was compelled to pass a law prohibiting ecclesiastics from visiting the houses of widows and virgins. Successive writers, as I have pointed out in a previous article, dilate at tedious length on the vices to which both monks and nuns were addicted. These writers, as Lecky says, "are full of accounts of nunneries that were like brothels, of the vast multitude of infanticides within their walls, and of that inveterate prevalence of incest among the clergy which rendered it necessary again and again to issue the most stringent enactments that priests should not be allowed to live with their mothers or sisters." That this statement is not exaggerated, all who have read the records of Church councils, etc., know full well. The Council of Aix-le-Chappel, in 836, said emphatically that the churches were "brothels rather than houses of God," and there is a deadly significance in its direction that nunneries shall be so built as to have no dark corners in which scandals may be perpetrated. The morals of the ninth century may be further imagined by the existence of regulations preventing the entrance of female animals into monasteries. Abelard's picture of the condition of things inside the Church in the eleventh century is too vile to admit of reproduction; but when we read of one abbot possessing seventeen illegitimate children in a single village, of another who kept no less than seventy concubines, of a bishop who was convicted of having sixty-five illegitimate children, and that when, at a much later date, 1563, inquiries as to clerical immorality were made in Spain, the inquiry was hurriedly dropped because of the enormous number of cases brought to light, we are introduced to a condition of things far worse than even the pictures drawn by Christians of pre-Christian society.*

The second result of the Christian advocacy of celibacy and general treatment of women was of a much more serious nature, since it directly and inevitably made for the brutalising of the race. The Church not only monopolised all intellectual pursuits and all the higher branches of life, and so compelled all who wished to cultivate such pursuits, even in the small measure then permitted, to do so under her patronage, but she chose to preach and exact celibacy. The result was what might have been expected. Matrimony being branded as disguised licentiousness, and celibacy held up as the ideal condition, the thoughtful and sensitive withdrew from the task of procreation, and thus left the perpetuation of the species to its most undesirable specimens. Those who had any noble aspirations at all, died and left no children; those whose ideals were of the lowest and grossest description left behind them a numerous progeny. There was, if not a survival of the unfit, at least a survival of the undesirable; and when the relation of Christianity to civilisation is finally determined by a really scientific inquiry, not the smallest count in the indictment against that creed will be its systematic degradation of the species by the preaching and enforcing of celibacy for so many centuries.

I have no time in the present series of articles to deal with the relation of modern Churches to the question of the equality of the sexes; nor is it necessary that I should do so. The question is one of historical inquiry, not of contemporary life; and as I have tried to show, and I think succeeded in showing, neither in the function of wife, of parent, nor as a member of the State, can Christianity honestly claim to have benefited woman. That the Churches have modified their teachings somewhat of late years does not prove that Christianity is any friend to woman, but only that social developments have gone on in spite of all the Churches could do in the shape of obstruction. The immense wave of liberalism set in motion by the French Revolution, the writings of Freethinkers like Mary Woolstonecraft and John Stuart Mill, to mention only two out of a host that might be named, have been steadily moulding public opinion on this matter; and the Churches, true to their historic policy, are now seeking to make capital out of teachings they have striven in vain to crush out of existence.

C. COHEN.

* *History of European Morals*, ii., p. 339.
† C. H. Pearson, *National Life and Character*, p. 243.
‡ For a full statement see Bayle's *Dictionary*, art. "Geddicus."

* For proofs of above-quoted cases see Lea, pp. 140, 141, 296-322, 349, first edition; and pp. 109, 264, second edition.

Churchgoers.

SOME go to church just for a walk;
Some to stare, and laugh, and talk;
Some go there to meet a friend;
Some their idle time to spend;
Some for general observation;
Some for private speculation;
Some to seek or find a lover;
Some a courtship to discover;
Some go there to use their eyes,
And newest fashions criticise;
Some to show their own smart dress;
Some their neighbors to assess;
Some to scan a robe or bonnet;
Some to price the trimming on it;
Some to learn the latest news,
That friends at home they may amuse;
Some to gossip false and true,
Safe hid within the sheltering pew;
Some go there to please the squire;
Some his daughters to admire;
Some the parson go to fawn;
Some to lounge and some to yawn;
Some to claim the parish doles;
Some for bread and some for coals;
Some because it's thought genteel;
Some to vaunt their pious zeal;
Some to show how sweet they sing;
Some how loud their voices ring;
Some the preacher go to hear,
His style and voice to praise or jeer;
Some forgiveness to implore;
Some their sins to varnish o'er;
Some to sit, and dose, and nod;
But few go there to worship God.

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Acid Drops.

Christians have been celebrating Christmas in the good old style. It was the anniversary of their God's incarnation for the salvation of the world, and they celebrate it in the most unspiritual way by unlimited eating and drinking. Turkey, sausages, ham, roast beef, plum pudding, etc., were washed down with beer, wine, and whisky. Card-playing, dances, and kissing under the mistletoe filled up the intervals of time. Altogether it was difficult to see where religion and Jesus Christ looked in.

The explanation of these odd proceedings is very simple. Christmas has really nothing to do with Jesus Christ except nominally. The twenty-fifth of December was an old Pagan festival, which Christianity appropriated in the fourth century after the alleged birth of its Founder. It was the birthday of all the Sun Gods of antiquity. The sun itself decisively began its new career on that day. Accordingly, it was an occasion for mirth and festivity. The nature-worshippers—and all religionists are that at bottom—looked forward to a new spring with its fresh green life, to a new summer with its lusty growths, and to a new autumn with its precious harvests.

Every bit of the outward celebration of Christmas pertains to this old nature-worship. Red and white berries and evergreens simply typify the dormant but indestructible life of the world. Down under the snow and the frozen soil there is kindly warmth, the roots cherish the waiting vitality, and the holly and mistletoe that defy the winter's cold are a pledge of the resurrection of the spring.

Grand old Sun! Thou wilt outlast all the gods. Thou art indeed the real god. All others are but shadows, types, and symbols of thee.

It is said that a Persian ambassador to England got as far north as Aberdeen, and an old Presbyterian lady of the granite city took him to task about his heathenism. "Oh, sir," she said, "they tell me you are an idolater." "No, madam," he replied, "I am not as bad as that." "Indeed, sir," she said, "they tell me you worship the sun." "Ah, madam," he replied, "and so would you if you had ever seen him." What they see in Aberdeen is a poor pale edition of what they see in the gorgeous East. There the sun forces himself upon you. You cannot ignore him. He is royal at all times, and terrible when he holds back the rain and parches the crops, and threatens famine and pestilence.

Freethinkers have as good right to a jollification on and about the twenty-fifth of December as the Christians have. Nay, a better right. There is no contradiction between their belief and their practice. They overlook the Christian interregnum and recur to the saner nature-worship of the antique world. They feel with Mr. Holyoake, that the God men seek is the Nature that they know.

When the great Mirabeau was dying, he had his couch wheeled to the open window, and as he looked up at the sun which was shining brightly he exclaimed: "Ah, if that is not God, it is his cousin german."

For our part, we have always shared that feeling of Mirabeau's. We hate the thought of dying within four walls. It would be sweeter to die in the open, with the great sky overhead, and natural sights and sounds about one, and to feel that death was indeed a melting back of the individual into the universe from which he came. One thinks that a great peace must fall even upon the wounded soldier dying out on the South African veldt; the stars looking down like pitiful eyes, and the wind speaking nature's message, "Come to me."

Mr. Horatio Bottomley seems to be a good deal cleverer than the Rev. Dr. Parker; unless they are *both* very clever, and the little arrangement of editing the *Sun* for a week was skilfully made up between them—to their mutual advantage. The *Westminster Gazette*, in its "City Notes," drew attention to the fact that Mr. Bottomley, who controls the *Sun*, floated three new companies during the week of Dr. Parker's editorship; one on Monday, one on Tuesday, and one on Friday. Our green-colored, but by no means "green," contemporary pointed out that readers of the *Sun* might be "tempted to subscribe by the prominence which that paper is giving to Bottomley companies, not only in its financial articles and its advertisements, but even in its price lists." "In this," our contemporary added, "it stands alone in the London Press, even as it is the only paper edited by an eminent divine." A nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse. We don't know much about City finance, but we rather think we understand the *Westminster's* suggestion; and, on the whole, we have a sort of belief that Dr. Parker has earned his——well, whatever he received for editing the *Sun* during that critical period.

One of Cromwell's captains was ordered to stop a certain parson from preaching and to shut up the church. When the officer entered the holy edifice with a few troopers, the parson skipped up into the pulpit and began jabbering. For a minute or two the grim Ironside listened in silence. Then he called out sternly: "Cease your fooling, sir, and come down." The man of God descended at once like the coon in the American story.

The following story is not quite as good, but it has its redeeming features. We cut it from the *Yorkshire Evening Post*: "The Free Church of Lonmore, Skye, has been vacant, and a Sunday or two after the accomplishment of the Union the Presbytery sent over to Lonmore the usual pulpit supply. He was one of the timorous type of preacher, and no sooner had he lifted up his head in the pulpit than this question was fired at him from the front pew by the leading elder of the congregation: 'Before you begin the public worship of God, we want to know are you for Rainy or are you for the Free Church?' The student was completely taken aback. He said he had been sent there by the United Free Church of Scotland. That was enough. He was assailed with cries of 'Come down out of that; come down out of that,' and there were even threats that if he did not 'come down out of that' they would make him come down. He came down."

"May his soul find pardon" is one of the concluding observations in a lengthy review of Professor Huxley's *Life and Letters* in the *Church Times*. It may be a pious wish, and may be sincerely meant. But it strikes the ordinary reader as a piece of clerical insolence. Who is this person who has the insufferable cheek to pen such an observation in regard to Huxley? Evidently he thinks that the dead scientist is in danger of being damned. Well, one would certainly prefer to be damned with Huxley than saved in company with the bigoted fool who writes nearly three columns of wretched drivel in the *C. T.* about a man of whom he knows apparently nothing and could say nothing worth listening to, even if he knew him.

He seems to be aware that Huxley played havoc with the Christian faith. But, of course, the faith has righted itself, and "now calmly, thankfully, we can still believe in God, in Christ, in miracle, and thank God for all those trials to Faith, for those unsparing attacks on the Faith, which have made us study the credentials, examine the Church's creeds, and clear away formulas which were in no sort of way laid down by the Bible, the Church, and the Creed, but which had been allowed to solidify and crystallise and deaden the Church's life."

To say or to imply that the formulas Huxley attacked were in no sort of way laid down by the Church is simply clear and deliberate lying. None but a clerical ass would attempt such a transparent imposition. The *Church Times*, which, after all, has some method in its Ritualistic madness, will probably think it well to dispense with a reviewer who displays not only a cavernous lack of knowledge and decency, but a shocking inability to write the Queen's English.

Continuing a discussion in the *Church Times* on village church life, a correspondent makes some observations on the not infrequent conflicts between squire and parson. He says: "Squires are a factor of country life, in which they have their own proper part to play, and it is quite common to find them gentlemen in the best sense of the word, while, on the other hand, clergy are sometimes not so."

There seems to have been a change in the rural scene since the time when the Chuch Catechism was quite understood to enforce the lesson:—

> God bless the squire and his relations,
> And keep us in our proper stations.

Recently Mr. Carvell Williams quoted this couplet in reply to the Bishop of Chester. The *Church Times* says no doubt the Catechism has been so misunderstood and even taught here and there. It is, however, a mistake to suppose that Church people generally have been brought up, through the Catechism, in notions of servility. We accept that statement, the more willingly because it is obvious that any attempt to so bring them up nowadays would end in conspicuous failure.

Rider Haggard, the novelist, says that athletic training is a most desirable preparation in the life of a missionary, "because nothing in a missionary impresses the savage so much as to find himself equalled or surpassed in strength and agility by the stranger." According to this, Sandow would be a champion missionary. He would only have to exhibit his biceps, and the heathen would accept his Bible immediately. An imported football team might induce unlimited religious faith.

The *Christian*, however, does not seem to approve of the novelist's idea. "Whoever heard," it asks, "of St. Paul, the greatest missionary the world has known, practising sprinting,

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or the game then most resembling our present-day hurdle-jumping, in order to impress the athletic Greeks with the beauty of Christ? Neither did this pioneer missionary skip round the amphitheatre with a net and trident in order to show the Romans what a Christian could accomplish. To train with the idea of 'showing off' before the savages, and thus impress them with Christianity, is most foreign to the spirit of Christ."

Perhaps an easier method of producing the same effect would be to tell the heathen of the wonderful feats of Samson, though, of course, there is just the possibility that the heathen might receive the narrative with incredulous laughter.

The prayers of the readers of *Tongues of Fire*—Reader Harris's journal—are asked on behalf of "a family of nine who are Scientists or Agnostics." There is something delightfully uncertain about this description. Evidently Scientists and Agnostics are regarded as being pretty much the same sort of people by the person who invites the prayers.

In order to raise funds for building a new church at Beira, a bull-fight was recently arranged. It is satisfactory to know that the pious promoters lost a considerable sum of money over the exhibition.

A *Sunday Sun* reviewer seems to entertain a very poor opinion of the book of sermons entitled *Words from St. Paul's*, published by Dr. Sinclair, Archdeacon of London. "It is filled," he says, "with as many platitudes as can conveniently be held within two covers." For those who are curious to secure examples of pulpit style he culls this garland of "instances." In each case they are the opening words of successive paragraphs :—

Take an instance. St. Augustine's mother
Take another instance. St. Augustine complains
Take another instance. St. Irenæus, speaking
Take another instance. St. Jerome declares
Take another instance. St. Gregory the Great said
Take yet one more instance. The same St. Gregory

One of the little slips to which the bookbinder is liable recently brought about a family complication. A young man, reading a sporting novel, *The Monk Wins*, bought a clean new copy, and sent it to an elderly and rich uncle, whose health compels him to live in the South of France, and renounce all the old delights of Newmarket and Goodwood. Presently the volume came back, with a curt note intimating that the uncle had no intention of dying just yet, and anyhow was not looking for religious instruction from his nephew. The cover of the novel, adorned with horseshoe and whip, proved to enclose "Thirty Plain Sermons," by the Rev. J. B. C. Murphy.

The Rev. W. H. Pierce says that, when he was in Klondyke, a traveller came to the mission-house with his toes very badly frozen, but refused to have anything done for them on the plea that he was a Christian Scientist. Several of the Indians came in and had some conversation with the man, who did his best to explain his creed. It was evident that his learned disquisition had little effect upon their unsophisticated minds, for a young chief tapped the Scientist on the brow, as he said, "Stranger, there is something wrong with your head, your brain is crooked"; and then significantly added, "Tell the missionary what size box you want, and we will bring it over for you." When the young man saw death staring him in the face, he relinquished his Christian Science foolishness, and allowed his toes to be treated.

The Rev. John Kelty, rector of the recently-formed parish of St. Hilda, Old Trafford, has been charged at the Manchester Police-court with misappropriating £400 which he had received as secretary of the Bishop of Manchester's fund for additional curates. There were also charges against him of falsification of accounts and forgery. He was committed for trial.

The Wolverhampton solicitor, Charles Brown Smith, who is in custody on his own confession of having robbed his two sisters of money left them by their father, was not only secretary of the English Church Union. He took a leading position with regard to all Church matters in the diocese, attending the ruri-decanal conferences and every important local gathering in connection with the Church. He will be very much missed in pious Midland circles.

To disgust young students with Christianity as a whole, it needs little more than to provide them with a copy, and insist on their reading it every day, of Mr. S. Croft's *Lessons on Church Doctrine*, which, on alternate pages, analyses "The Faith" in mercilessly dogmatic style, and then devotes intermediate lessons to the subject of "Faith in the Faith," whatever that obscure title may convey. As an example of the style of demonstration, the doctrine of the Trinity is shown to be shadowed forth in Nature as follows :—

(1) Plants { Root—Shoot—Fruit. / Trefoil—Mistletoe—Lily.
(2) Water. Fount—River—Lake.
(3) Man. Body—Soul—Spirit.

It is needless to remark that Plants, Water, and Man do not between them make up the entire creation; nor need any of these be subdivided, as is here done; in fact, the number *three* here selected is purely arbitrary.—*Church Gazette.*

During the last few months three men of color, claiming to be inspired, have caused serious trouble in different parts of the world. In the Equatorial province of the Soudan Mohamed ben Ali organised a crusade against the Christian inhabitants of the more northern part of the country, and collected an army of nearly forty thousand Somalis and Soudanese. It took the whole army of Menelik to subdue this new Mahdi. To come nearer home, a riot was caused in St. Malo recently by a negro from Morocco called Desabord. He predicted the immediate collapse of the British Empire and the revival of the Empire of Charlemagne under a new French Emperor. The crowds that followed him became so excited that the authorities, fearing an anti-English riot, arrested the dusky prophet. In the province of Madras, in India, a whole district went on strike because an ordinary ryot or peasant suddenly gave out that he was a prophet, that on the site of his home were going to appear a city, a temple, and a lake. Hundreds of natives flocked to the place bringing grain to be blessed. The end of it was that the authorities interfered, and a riot ensued, in which two policemen were clubbed to death, eleven natives killed, sixteen badly wounded, and sixty, including the prophet, arrested.

The New York *Outlook* has asked ten men of eminence in literature and education to mention the books published in the nineteenth century which, in their judgment, have most influenced its thoughts and activities. All the contributors regard Darwin's *Origin of Species* as the most influential book of the century. The *Methodist Times* admits that no one could dispute that unanimous vote, the "evolutionary theory having affected theology as well as every branch of science." "Affected" is good, as applied to a theory which has cut away the very ground-work of the Christian faith—all Christian protestations to the contrary notwithstanding.

In all, fourteen books are named, and at the end of the list are Comte's *Social Philosophy*, Herbert Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*, and Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. Principal Fairbairn and others have voted for the last-named on the ground that that remarkable work, "although long superseded and practically forgotten," was the occasion of learned investigations which, by the application of historical methods and the Higher Criticism, have "led to the rehabilitation of Scriptural and primitive Christianity."

But *is* Strauss either long superseded or practically forgotten? We think not. There is an admirable brochure called *The Birth of Christ*, from Strauss's famous work, with an introduction by Mr. Foote, included in the list of the Freethought Publishing Company. As to whether Scriptural and primitive Christianity have been "rehabilitated," there is at least a strong negative opinion, which finds its expression in the daily increasing number of unbelievers.

Of the forty-nine missionaries murdered in the recent rising in China no fewer than thirty-three were women, most of them girls. This looks as if the male missionaries took care of themselves. The *Examiner*, following other religious journals, questions the policy of the China Inland Mission in sending unprotected young girls to such distant stations in a country where they are far from European help. Of course, it is an atrocious policy that should be stopped at once. The Chinese are really "child-like and bland" until they are assailed. These women, if they went there as mere visitors, or remained as peaceable residents, would be free from interference. But they go in an aggressive and fanatical spirit, with or without the male missionaries, and absolutely court the martyrdom which sometimes occurs.

When Miss Stevens, one of these Christian intruders, was last in England, she said: "I don't think I have yet finished the work God has for me in China. I must go back. Perhaps—who knows?—I may be among those who will be *allowed* to give their lives for the people." That's the spirit they go in. They deliberately invite death by assailing the gods of the country where they know they only remain on sufferance. And all they achieve is the nominal adherence—purchased at a most extravagant price—of the veriest native scum.

Miss Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, the daughter of Sir Henry Fowler, M.P., has published, in a sumptuous form, a volume of her early poems. She is mainly known as the author of *Isabel Carnaby*, afterwards of *The Double Thread*, and later of *The Farringdons*. Her Methodist friends, and others of

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the Free Churches, have boomed her novels for much more than they are worth. One looks in vain for the smartness and epigrammatic genius which her quite too kind reviewers affect to discover in her works. *The Double Thread* is, perhaps, the best; but it turns on what any man of sense must know is an utter impossibility.

But, whatever her novels may be, these poems by Miss Fowler, raked up from albums and the litter of schoolgirl days, are a little too much for the acceptance of even her Dissenting friends of the press. One of her Free Church critics says: "Miss Fowler's seat on her Pegasus is not very secure, and she is apt to bump heavily to earth." Which seems to suggest that idiotic music-hall ditty, "What ho! she bumps." The following verse of hers must be something of a knock-back even to her most devoted admirers:—

I viewed it not with such disgust
As wiser heads would feel for it,
But trusted it as I would trust
The words of Holy Writ.

Miss Fowler, in her younger days, may have been led to regard "Holy Writ" as unadulterated and unassailable truth. But we are not expected nowadays, even by High Church dignitaries, to so consider it. Alas, when the coster now avers "It's Gawspel truth," the cabby and the "copper" grin, for then they know he must be a chap of neglected education.

"Faith at the Century's End" is the subject of a leading article in the *Christian World*. Of course, a very hopeful view is taken, but the writer admits "it is impossible to deny that a great revolution has been wrought in average Christian thought about the origin, nature, and authority of the Bible." It adds that "such a change could not but have its effect upon the creeds of the Churches." The *C. W.* points out that most of these changes were the subject of prophetic denunciation in the early part of the century, and even after it had passed its prime; but courage has been found to face these threats, and the remarkable thing is that "nobody seems one penny the worse."

The latter statement is hardly in accordance with the facts. The religious world is, of course, all the better for having divested itself of a great deal of old-time superstition. For this relief its thanks are primarily due to Freethinkers. The changes have not originated in the Churches, but have been forced upon them from without. Priests, parsons, and ministers are considerably the worse, for their authority has undergone a most extensive diminution. The Bible, as an inspired book, is very much the worse, for its claims have been shattered to pieces.

We learn from the *Sunday Companion* that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes "possesses the gift of smart repartee to a remarkable degree." This is somewhat in the nature of news, but we don't dispute it. How could we, after reading the following instance given by the admiring *S. C.*: "When an indignation meeting was held at City-road Chapel to protest against Publicans' Compensation, as introduced into Parliament, Mr. Hughes was one of the principal speakers. 'If this Government should persist in this iniquitous proposal,' he cried, in tones of wrathful indignation, 'then it must be turned out.' '*You* can't turn it out!' yelled a red-faced, publican-kind of a man, springing up in the gallery. No!' exclaimed the speaker, in a voice which thrilled the audience, 'but God Almighty can!'"

There should be something very smart and telling about this, or why was the audience thrilled? If we read it again, we don't seem to get any "forrader" in the way of discovering brilliance or point in the retort. Of course, "God Almighty" can do pretty much what he pleases. That goes without saying, amongst religious people. He could turn the Government out, because it could hardly have gone in without his permission. If the "red-faced, publican-kind of man" had asked Mr. Price Hughes, "Why doesn't he?" what would Mr. Price Hughes have said? However, it's something to know that Mr. Hughes has "the gift of smart repartee." That is one little fact to start the new century with.

The stipends of the Dean and Canons of Rochester Cathedral have fallen quite thirty per cent. during the last few years in consequence of agricultural depression. This is the pathetic news communicated to various Church journals. It is really very sad—almost moves one to tears. Yet, after all, the Dean and Canons are a long way off the poverty in which Christ and his disciples rejoiced. When they get down to that, if ever they do, let them complain through the press once more. We don't promise them our sympathy even then, but no doubt there will be some pious folk—male or female, more likely the latter—who will come to their assistance.

A suggestion is made that the "poor clergy" should keep poultry. The vicar of Leonard Stanley, Gloucester, proudly announces he has paid income tax on three hundred a year, net gains from his poultry. What about his parishioners? To make that profit on poultry, he must devote the best part of his time and attention to their pens and "runs." We have no objection to parsons keeping poultry—or pigs, if the parishioners are agreeable. A great many parsons would be much more usefully employed in that way than in preaching sermons. But when it comes to doing it in this wholesale way, we think the parson should resign his living and stipend and open a shop.

The possibility of infection from the Communion cup is now being discussed by *The Hospital*. It says that the tendency to make the "lowest of the low" full participators in all that the ritual of the Church offers brings the "nicer" members of a congregation into close relationship with many "most undesirable co-religionists." That is to say, the latter may be good enough to approach Christ spiritually, but not the "nicer" class of Christians physically. This is a fine commentary on the precept and example of Christ, who seems to have purposely consorted with the pariahs of Judea.

As a method of avoiding infection, *The Hospital* suggests that, "just as the bread is placed upon the palm of the outstretched hand and swallowed without handling, so there ought to be no difficulty in placing a drop of the wine, and leaving it also to be swallowed in the same way."

Well—what next? So a communicant is to lick a spot of wine from his hand! Why not follow this up by licking the celebrant's boots. All for the love of Jesus.

A doctor in Turin has carefully examined some samples of "holy water" in that city, and has found great quantities not merely of impurities, but also of microbes, including some that are considered deadly. This fact having come to the knowledge of the Bishop of Fano, a circular was sent round among the priests of the diocese enjoining special care in this matter, and urging various sanitary precautions in churches and confessionals.

Fancy being poisoned with "holy water"! One might as well go to Manchester and get poisoned with arsenical beer.

I Sometimes Think.

I SOMETIMES think, when I behold
A pious bigot raving,
That Jesus saves a lot of souls
That are not worth the saving;
I even think (although no doubt
God nothing can arrange ill)
That many à dandy saint will make
A shabby-looking angel.

I sometimes think (although, of course,
It is a wicked rudeness)
That piety is nothing but
A cheaper sort of goodness;
That grace is not the kind of stuff
To feed a hungry sinner,
And people often give a prayer
When they should give a dinner.

I sometimes think—oh, saintly folks,
Forgive me if you can—
That he may be a perfect saint
Who is not half a man;
That if religion meant good deeds
No honest man would doubt it;
If less it means, then honest men
Can get along without it.

I sometimes think, and dare to say,
In spite of pious drivel,
That when man sends the priest away
He'll shake hands with the Devil;
If men would think instead of dream,
And work instead of fret,
Hell would cool for want of fuel,
And heaven would be to let.

I sometimes think that, after all,
God, if his name be hallow'd,
Will judge us by our deeds, not by
The dogmas we have swallowed;
That he alone is truly good,
Though fools and priests may doubt it
Who lives a useful, honest life,
And holds his tongue about it.

WALLACE NELSON.

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 30, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "Faith and Freethought in the Old Century and the New One."

January 6, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—January 20, Sheffield; 27, Leicester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

FAIR-DEALER.—You will find, on proper examination, that we understated, rather than overstated, the inflictions perpetrated by the Christian "avengers" upon the Chinese. The whole truth will not be made known until these operations in the name of "civilisation and humanity" are over. But some of it has leaked out, and it is ghastly enough to give a humane man the nightmare. Mr. George Lynch, a well-known correspondent, after telling of loot, murder, and violation, said:—"There are things that I must not write, and that you [the *Daily Express*] could not print, that would seem to show that this western civilisation of ours is merely a veneer over savagery." Here is another significant passage:—"The victors will have their shares of discomforts, but woe to the vanquished men, women, and children during the next six months."

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—T. T. (Hull), 5s. (second instalment); J. Strachan and R. Reed, 3s.; Barnsbury Branch, 10s.

G. MULLETT.—The special claims of the Bible have to be opposed in many ways. Robert Taylor's astronomical method is valuable, but it does not cover all the ground. You are quite wrong in supposing that the mythical theory has been abandoned by Freethought advocates. A good deal has been written about it at various times in the *Freethinker*, and some valuable essays on the subject are collected together in J. M. Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past*.

T. T. (Hull).—Thanks for your good wishes for the new year. We have a harder task before us than ever, and need all the encouragement of our friends.

STUDENT.—There is a very good and fairly full account of Giordano Bruno in the Rev. John Owen's *Skeptics of the Italian Renaissance*. It is wonderfully sympathetic and impartial, considering the author's profession. The section on Vanini is also valuable.

PROVINCIAL.—We shall, of course, be very glad to see any provincial friends who can attend the Annual Dinner on January 14. Some may have business to transact in London, and may be able to arrange to do it just then. There are always a few non-Londoners at the dinner. An opportunity of shaking hands and talking with Mr. Foote and his leading colleagues will be afforded in the reception room before the dinner, and also at a later stage of the proceedings.

RECEIVED.—Midland Daily Telegraph—Two Worlds—Huddersfield Examiner—Free Society—The Yorkshire Evening Post—Freidenker—Blue Grass Blade.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing him against copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

Special.

FREETHINKERS all over Great Britain and Ireland are requested to note that the second "Shilling Week" in aid of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund is fixed for the beginning of January. During the first seven days of that month—the first in the new century—the "rank and file" of the Freethought party are invited to send me at least one shilling each, and as many more as possible. Every subscription will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker*. Some of those who subscribed to the October "Shilling Week" will probably subscribe again. Hundreds who did *not* subscribe will now have another (and last) opportunity. I beg them all to remember that this Fund is a specially important one. Its object is to counteract the immense efforts of the Christian Churches. Vast sums of money are being raised to spread and strengthen the Christian superstition. It is the duty of Freethinkers to oppose that enterprise. This cannot be done by mere wishes, but only by practical means. And the *most* practical means is *giving* something for "the good old cause."

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

THIS evening (Dec. 30) Mr. Foote lectures again at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road. The date is one day only from the end of the year and the end of the nineteenth century. The subject will, therefore, be suitable to such an occasion—namely, "Faith and Freethought in the Old Century and the New One." This will be a careful centennial address, to which London Freethinkers are earnestly invited, and to which they should try to bring their liberal-minded friends.

Mr. Foote delivers three lectures at Birmingham on Sunday (Jan. 6). Full details will appear in our next issue. We have not yet received a bill of the lectures from Birmingham. Probably the meetings will be held in the Prince of Wales' Assembly Room. The local "saints" will doubtless see announcements in the newspapers and elsewhere.

We had recently one of those rare and agreeable experiences which give a fresh zest to life. An old Baptist minister called at our office and asked if he might venture to leave half-a-guinea as a Christmas box for Mr. G. J. Holyoake, who, he heard, was in a state of poverty bordering on destitution. We assured him that Mr. Holyoake, while by no means wealthy, was certainly not in *that* condition. The reverend gentleman then asked if he might leave a Christmas box of the same amount for Mrs. Wheeler. "Yes," we told him, and he left it. "We don't all believe alike," he said, "but we all share a common humanity." Before we parted he gave us his name and address, which, of course, are not for publication. We do not know whether this paragraph will meet his eyes or not. If it does, he will be aware that we regard his action as a bit of splendid magnanimity. We are at war—hard, relentless war—with Christianity, but we salute *the man* whenever we find it behind the clergyman's cloth.

Metropolitan Freethinkers are requested to note the date of the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on Monday evening, January 14. Tickets are on sale at 4s. each, as usual. They can be obtained at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, at the Athenæum Hall, or from any London Branch secretary.

Mr. P. Shaughnessy writes to us from Glasgow:—"During the last few months I have been selling back copies of the *Freethinker* at whatever they would bring. You will know that they are going splendidly when I tell you that I have sold 471 copies since Sunday last. By circulating old numbers of the *Freethinker* at my open-air meetings I am killing two birds with one stone. Your journal is being advertised, and I am getting a little profit, which is necessary to the carrying on of my lectures." Mr. Shaughnessy asks for a further supply, which Miss Vance is attending to. He says that the local "saints" gave him all the *Freethinkers* they had piled up for years, but that source has run dry.

We have always back copies of the *Freethinker* on hand, as this journal is supplied to the trade on sale or return; and we shall be happy to arrange for the disposal of any quantity

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at open-air meetings—or other meetings, for that matter—in London or the provinces. Applications for supplies should be sent to Miss E. M. Vance, at the Freethought Publishing Company's office, 1 Stationer's Hall Court, London, E.C.

The present number of the *Freethinker* had to be got out in a great hurry, owing to the Christmas holidays; in fact, two numbers of this journal had to be seen through the press in one week. The task has been a heavy one, and the matter of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund has to stand over for our New Year's number. There is still time, therefore, for those who have not yet redeemed their promises.

A Warning to Blasphemers.

As a caution to any of our youthful readers who may be tempted to fall into the dreadful and deadly sin of "blasphemy," an offence deemed the more abominable since it is directed not against man, but against God, the following well-known, if not well-authenticated, story is given as illustrating the odious character of the crime and the awful punishment with which it is visited.

J. C. was born of poor but possibly honest parents in the little village of B——. The few records of his infancy show that he was precocious and impudent to his parents and elders. He even displayed his insolence at twelve years of age to the ministers of religion, and gave his sorrowing parents a deal of trouble. On one occasion he said to his mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" and he is even said to have cast doubts upon his own paternity by his father, one Joseph—a respectable village carpenter. In an evil hour he assumed to be the son of God. This dreadful blasphemy, followed as it was by a crazy claim to rule over the kingdom, and the stealing of a donkey in order to ride in triumph through the principal city where he created a riot in the Temple, finally led to his arrest by the police, when he was immediately deserted by all the ignorant fisher folk and tag-rag vagabond followers whom he had gathered around him. The president judge, upon hearing him speak, said: "We have heard the blasphemy; what think ye?" And they all condemned him to death as guilty.

He was handed over to the authorities and summarily executed. But this is not the most surprising part of the affair, for it is related that all nature was convulsed as if in horror at his blasphemy, and that he who had boasted that legions of angels were ready to protect him died shrieking that he was forsaken by God.

O dear reader, whenever you are tempted by Satan to commit the horrible sin of blasphemy, may you never forget the sad life and horrible death of the notorious blasphemer J. C.

Lucianus.

The New Doxology.

Praise cant from which our riches flow!
Praise it ye clerics here below!
Praise it ye "nobs"—a mighty host—
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

Praise God for all the simple fools
Who make for us such ready tools,
Without whose aid throughout the land
Scarcely a day our craft could stand.

Praise God for our old worn-out creed
By which we still the people bleed!
And let us raise our voices higher—
Praise him for brimstone and hell-fire!

Praise him for queens and tyrant kings!
May we all value such dear things!
And teach the people 'tis God's will
Their toil should royal coffers fill.

Praise God for dukes and lords and earls,
All better flesh than common churls;
Praise him for bishops strong in might
To bless the wrong and curse the right.

Praise God for partridge, pheasant, deer,
For brandy, wine, and tithe-got cheer;
And tell the people, lacking bread,
Christ had not where to lay his head.

Praise God above, praise Cant below!
Praise God in haste, and praise Cant slow!
Praise God aloud, but praise Cant most!
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

R. Anderson.

Truth, like a gentle shower, soaks through the ears, and moistens the intellect.—*Bergerac.*

Mary's Little Lamb.

A TALE OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS.

Christmas comes but once a year, and, considering the gluttony and wine-bibbing which goes on when it *does* come, it is perhaps a very good thing that the season occurs no oftener. Hundreds of Christmases, and therefore hundreds of years, have rolled by since the first one ushered into the world the most surprising baby that ever suckled and squealed. All the babies born since were commonplace in comparison with this astonishing youngster; and never, except when the stars sang together for joy, in a chorus that would have been well worth a shilling ticket, did nature show such uncommon interest in any event as in the appearance of this little lump of human dough. Nature has probably been sorry for her enthusiasm ever since. She is not easily excited, and her pace is steady as a mule. But as Jove nods, nature has an occasional fling. She went into raptures on the first Christmas, and when the chief person born on that day made his exit from this mortal stage she went black in the face with panic fear or hysterical sorrow. From that time she has conducted herself with exemplary decorum, and no doubt she is heartily ashamed of the indiscretions and eccentricities she was guilty of on the occasions referred to.

The story of the first Christmas is partly written in certain old manuscripts, of questionable date and authorship, which are regarded with extreme veneration by millions of people who know next to nothing about them. But there are many lapses and large deficiencies in the narrative, and we are authorised to supply what is wanting. We claim infallibility, of course, yet we do not deny it to others. Those who dissent from our version are free to make up one of their own, and it will doubtless be as infallible as ours. This may sound strange, but it is quite philosophical for all that. Do not all the Churches differ from each other, yet are they not all infallible? Why should one infallible man cut another infallible man's throat or put him in prison? Why cannot two infallible men dwell together in the same street like two greengrocers?

But to our story. It was the first Christmas Eve. A donkey was patiently wending his way to Jerusalem. On his back was seated a lady of some seventeen summers, and by his side walked a sturdy young man. They were husband and wife. The young man evidently belonged to the artisan class, and his better half was in that condition in which ladies love to be who love their lords. Both looked forward with unusual interest to the birth of the expected child. They had settled what name it should be called, so there was no doubt whatever as to its sex.

The day was drawing to an end when they approached Bethlehem. Making their way to an hotel kept by a relative of theirs, they asked for accommodation. Mr. Isaacs shook his head. "I am very sorry, Joe," he said, "but we are full up, and the worst of it is every hotel in the place is in the same state. Over an hour ago I tried desperately hard to oblige an old customer, a gentleman in the bacon trade, with a bed for the night, but I tried every hotel in Bethlehem without success. Fortunately I rigged up a few extra beds in the stable, and he has taken one of them. If you like another you are welcome, and egad, Joe! that's the best I can do for you."

"Thank you, old fellow," said Joe, "but Mary is in a delicate state, as you see, and I would like to fix her up comfortably. Can't you go in and see if there is any gentleman who will go outside to oblige a lady?"

Mr. Isaacs returned in five minutes, and said it was no use. One gentleman had a bad cold, another had the gout, another the lumbago, and so on. Joseph and Mary were therefore obliged to return to the stable.

While Joseph was grooming the donkey Mr. Isaacs came in and started a curious conversation. "Joe," he began, "I don't wish to interfere with your business, but as a relative and an old friend you will pardon me for saying that I am a little puzzled; you have only been married four months, and if Mary is not a mother in a few days my name isn't Isaacs." Joseph did not resent these remarks, his natural meekness being such that no insult could ever disturb it. With a solemn

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face he replied: "My dear Isaacs, there is nothing to pardon. Mary's baby is not mine. Its father lives in heaven. He is an angel, or something very high there. Mary has often told me all about it, but I have such a bad memory for details. The fact is, however, that Jeshua—we've settled his name—was conceived miraculously, as I've heard say some of the great ones among the heathen were. You may smile, but I've Mary's word for it, and she ought to know."

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Isaacs, "if you're satisfied, of course I am. I don't say Mary's story would go down with me if I were in your place, but I've no right to grumble if you are contented."

Thereupon Joseph, with a still more solemn face, replied: "Well, I was a little incredulous myself at first, but all my doubts were dispelled after that dream I had. I saw an angel at my bedside, and he told me that Mary's story was quite correct, and I was to marry her. Some of the neighbors chattered about a Roman soldier, called Pandera, who used to hang about her house while I was away at work in the south; but I regard it as nothing but gossip, and Mary says they are a pack of liars."

Mr. Isaacs returned to his customers in the hotel, winking and putting his finger to his nose directly his back was turned. Meanwhile Joseph and Mary had supper, after which she felt very unwell, and, as luck or providence would have it, she was confined soon after twelve o'clock of a bouncing boy. Mr. Isaacs resolutely refused to turn any customer out of his bed, so the new comer was cradled in a manger filled with the softest hay.

Soon afterwards a fiery, kite-shaped object was seen in the sky, advancing towards Bethlehem, and finally it rested on the chimney stack of Mr. Isaacs' hotel, where it gave such a lovely illumination that half the town turned out to see it. Two enterprising spirits who mounted a ladder to inspect it closely, and if possible bring it down, were struck as if by lightning, and were with great difficulty restored to consciousness by the skill and efforts of a dozen doctors.

While the people were in a state of bewilderment, six old gentlemen appeared on the scene. They were attired like the priests of Persia, and their venerable appearance and long white beards filled the spectators with reverence. Only one of them could speak Hebrew, and he acted as interpreter for the company. "Where," he inquired in a deep majestic voice, "is the wondrous babe who is born to-night? We saw his portent in the east, and have followed it hither nearly six hundred miles." Mr. Isaacs informed them that the wondrous babe was in the stable, at which they were greatly astonished. Four of them said they must have made a mistake, and were for going home again; but the other two pointed to the supernatural light on the hotel chimney, and after they had consumed three bottles of Mr. Isaacs' best Eschol they all made for the object of their search. Directly they entered the stable, little Jeshua stood up in the manger and eyed them, and as they advanced he accosted them in their own language. This removed any doubts they entertained, and they at once knelt down and offered him the presents they had brought with them. One gave him a cake of scented soap, another a pretty smelling-bottle, another an ivory rattle, another a silver fork, another a gold spoon, and another a cedar plate inlaid with pearl. Little Jeshua took the gifts very politely, and made a graceful little bow and a neat little speech in acknowledgment of their kindness. Then handing them over to his mother, to keep till the morning, he sang with great sweetness "Lay me in my little bed."

Soon after daylight some shepherds came in from the hills, saying they had seen a ghost, who had talked to them in enigmatical language; they could not understand exactly what he meant, but they gathered that good times were coming, when poor shepherds would eat mutton instead of watching it. On hearing of what had happened in the town precisely at the same time they were still more astonished. All Bethlehem was in uproar. Everybody was talking about little Jeshua, and the presents that were brought him by the enthusiastic inhabitants filled three large vans when Joseph and Mary set out again.

(Written in 1886.) G. W. F.

The Dignity of Life.

MAN IS AS GREAT AS HE FEELS.

No man is wise enough to tell what time is. A day is a mystery bounded by two twilights, an unknown ushered in by the dawn and ushered out by the dark. A year is the frolic of the planets on the playground of the infinite, a celestial jest of eternity. We speak of time as if it were a thing; we say it is slow-footed or fleet; that it is past, present, or to come.

The man of the Apocalypse saw an angel with one foot on the land and the other on the sea, and heard him cry, "Time was, time is, but time shall be no more." We cannot think of time as existing in itself and apart from other things, and we cannot think of other things as existing apart from time. It is an essential condition of life and thought and being; without it they cannot be. To one who thinks, all is mystery. At every step we are confronted and confounded by the unknown. Every path we take leads to the inscrutable. We speak of the material universe, but cannot tell what matter is; we measure the distances between revolving planets and stellar worlds, but cannot tell what space is. We think of the infinite and give him a name, but God remains the unknown. We believe in our own spirit and esteem it superior to the body, but the soul hath no man seen. We stretch out the mysterious day and call it eternity; we shorten the mysterious eternity and call it a day. Canopied by the unknown, horizoned by the unsearchable, baffled equally by the atom and by the infinitude, we spend our years and pass on.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MUTATION.

At this period the thoughts of men show many moods. The habit of the world's thought and the potency of the calendar have their effect upon us all. In multitudes of minds there is the mood of reflection, of introspection and reverie. With others there is the periodic moral spasm. Multitudes once in a year awake to the dim consciousness that they have not been altogether as good and upright as saints, and to-morrow they will begin all over again, and the day after return to the old story. For the most part the period is one of general depression of spirits. There is always sadness in the backward look; then memory, keen and vivid, presents the things that are gone, the loves that are lost. With silent and reverent tread the mournful spirit visits the altars of sadness, of sorrow, and of pain. Perhaps in the retrospect, in the periodic moral spasm, and in brooding in a spirit of sadness there is neither wholesomeness, spiritual health, nor strength. The world for ages has been under the influence of a determined and persistent habit of thought—a habit of thought that has issued in what may be called the philosophy of mutation. The world has been regarded as a vast cemetery, a place where generation follows generation, only to take its appointed place where oblivion broods and memory forgets. The attention of men is directed to monuments that mark where other ages have lived, and toiled, and flourished, and declined, and passed away. We are told with great cheerfulness that the earth has had enough of human beings as its inhabitants to make all the land upon the globe one continuous grave where the bodies of the dead would lie six deep. The habit of looking at the world as a thing of change and mutation has gotten itself into literature and into religion. Omar Khayyam, the astronomer poet of Persia, cries with a sort of defiance and despair:—

> Come, fill the cup, and in the fires of Spring
> Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
> The Bird of Time has but a little way
> To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

THE PLAINT OF PIOUS PESSIMISM.

Mrs. Hemans repeats the dolorous strain when she says:—

> Leaves have their time to fall,
> And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath;
> And, stars to set—but all,
> Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!

I will confess that the eternal holding up of the symbol of decay and the fact of change and transition is, in my judgment, unwholesome, unphilosophic, and unnecessary. Religion has been the most inordinate sinner in this respect. "We all do fade as a leaf. We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are three score and ten, and, if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away." What right has a man to fling in the face of the divine year the miserable plaint of his own pessimism? Let him stand up and live and be glad for his three score years and ten, and, if by reason of strength he has four score years, let him glory in that many more years of gladness and rejoicing. Religion has never yet struck the victorious tone. It has always cultivated the spirit of gloom and despair. This came from the philosophy of mutation, the habit of looking upon things as swift passing to dissolution and the grave. There was a religious sect who had no other mission, so they thought, than to tell the hour the world should end.

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That has been one of the singular infatuations of the religionist. Jesus of Nazareth lost his mental balance once so thoroughly as to believe and to tell his disciples that in a few months or years at the outside, while they were still living, the end of the world would come. Paul was beguiled with the same dream of the pessimist, and he said : "It is at our very doors, near at hand ; directly you will hear the bugle in the sky, and in a chariot of clouds will come the final, sovereign judge, and the people will be caught up and changed in the twinkling of an eye, and floated away to a safe elevation from which they may witness the destruction of the earth." It was a pleasant outlook! In 1843, in this country, notably in the Middle States, a great excitement and vast amount of agony were produced by the preacher Miller, who had definitely fixed the time of the great catastrophe. The Lord was about to come to clean house and begin all over again. The women actually made their ascension robes, had their celestial trousseau in readiness, and the day before kept their hair in curling-pins. It takes something more than the end of the world to make women neglect those things.

A GLOOMY HABIT OF THOUGHT.

By this infatuation religion has laid upon the human world its most terrific and intolerable burdens. It will be impossible for mankind, though they give their united effort for generations, to overcome this habit of the world's thought about change and death. We are yet held by the tyrannic grasp of the world's child-thought. We reduce everything to the terms of our own limitations. We think of time, the unending, the unbegun, in terms of the year. We are slaves of the calendar. It is the passing days and the increasing months, and the rapidly fleeting years, that lay a burden upon us all. We think of human life under the influence of race-thought, as a drama of which its opening scene is the birth and the closing scene the grave. A little way from the cradle with its lullaby of love to the falling of the clods on the coffin lid. Let any man examine his own thought, and he will see that his conception of life is held within these limitations. We have dramatised even the divine existence and reduced God to terms of our own limitation. We imagine him with his changing aspects and phases ; now he is pleading, then again he is punishing, we have him with his times and seasons; we have reduced him to little things; he is counting hairs and keeping a list of the dead and missing. We have not been great enough to think of God as great. We are yet in the kindergarten amusing ourselves with painted appearances and pleasing our fancies with fictions.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PERMANENT.

There is another way of thinking about these things that we may attain to, a philosophy which, in distinction from the old race-habit of thought, may be called the philosophy of the permanent. Its fundamental postulate is that whatever is is, and always was and always will be ; that there is no beginning, and will be no end ; that God is not old, and was never young. The supreme fact of the universe is the fact of existence. What we look upon as change and variation, appearance and disappearance, are in no sense the essence of existence, but only incidental to, and not inimical to, existence. The universe by a thousand tongues declares that the supreme fact is the fact of being. To be or not to be is not the question. Not to be is unthinkable. Because we are childlike, because we are blinded and beguiled by the circumstances of being, we lose sight of the fact of being.

By this philosophy of the permanent, what we call mutation and change are but ministers and servants of life, not its destroyers, not its enemy. They are the method of the revelation of being. To be—there is nothing beyond, nothing higher than the fact of existence. Beyond the conception of being the human mind cannot pass ; higher than it it cannot rise ; lower than it it cannot descend ; that is the supreme fact, the infinite fact, the universal fact. If we could once reach the firm conviction that being is the great fact of the universe, why, then, time, change, age, the grave, death—all these things become mere trivialities at which we smile.

By this philosophy, time has no beginning, can have no end. There was no yesterday, there can be no to-morrow. It is but an everlasting, infinite now, and what we call time, the days, the years, are but variations by which the infinite "now" becomes manifest to us. They may come and go, or they may cease coming and going, but that now which they manifest would exist forever as it always has existed. The years are but the fringe of eternity's robe which we touch ; they are the strands from which the planets, like shuttles, weave the garment of time out of infinite timelessness. Death has nothing to do with life, unless it be a form of manifestation of it. Life is no part of death. We have imagined that this body was life. By death we know that the body is an incident to life, but we have not been able to think of life as apart from the body, so the grave has infinite sadness, and there is no consolation there. But if we could imagine life as a thing that is and always was, the body the form of its habitation and truly subservient to it, life as transcendent after death as before, death would then be an incident. Give me a flower—I have said life always was, the body was its manifestation, one of the lowest terms in which it could be made known. Before ever the flower was in its visible form, it was.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE FLOWER.

Nothing was made, nothing created, not an atom added to the universal sum of things ; it was somewhere, atom and petal and calyx and crown, hue and tint and perfume, it did exist ; night brooded over the earth, and the day came with its light ; the falling snowflakes covered and couched the place where it slept ; the sun's rays touched the waiting world ; the mingled mimicry of dawn and twilight played upon the throbbing soil ; stellar worlds and shining suns mingled and blent their rays with the moist, cool earth, and responding to the thrill of passion and of life, the earth manifested the flower. It always was. It was before ever the earth, like a mother, could take in her glad hand and on her ample bosom the flower-child ; it was when the star-dust and the fire-mist in the illimitable vast were everywhere and universally diffused. How we may not know, and need not care ; but it was ; and, having been before, who dare say it will not be after, when it is faded, drooped, and withered—when it is a thing of beauty and joy no longer, and the housemaid throws it away? What has become of the flower? I do not need to know, because I cannot know ; but it is not destroyed ; no atom has gone from the universal sum ; no sense of ours may be able to trace its history further ; we must leave it in the mystery ; but the mighty genius of life that wombed it in secret and brought it forth in its glory will know its shadowed way, and watch and keep it forever

I will believe in the immortality of the flower—of force, of matter, there can be no end ; but our thought is upon the flower, and we say with Felicia Hemans, "Flowers have their time to wither"—and they do ; but do they have their time to die and become extinguished, and become naught? Had we senses fine enough, we might find the flower before there was a trace of the flower ; had we sense keen enough, we might find it after it has withered and passed from the sight of human vision.

THE AUGUST FACT OF LIFE.

If we could think of life, then, as a fact, and not as a form, we should think less harshly of death and the grave, care less for fleeting years, and rejoice in life. We take things too seriously ; we lay too much emphasis upon the circumstance of life—too little upon the august fact. We are here, not by our own act of choosing ; we are here, and here is the world, and here is all the mysterious power that we call God. Now, being here, we are free from any responsibility of having come, or of going out. We are here—that is the main fact ; and the universal laws or forces that called us into being, name them as we may, are responsible for us. Between the meanest clod, between the humblest thing that creeps and crawls, and nothing, there is infinite distance. To be a part of the world's fact, an existence among existences, a being in its immeasurable vast, ought to be dignity and glory enough to make every man and woman stand up and rejoice in the fact of being.

But there are inescapable sadnesses, wounds that never heal.

I heard an old, gray-haired man tell the other day about his child, a little boy four years old, taken suddenly ill, and, while in his father's lap, stood up and put his arms around his father's neck, and died that way ; and the old man spoke of it with all the agony of a crushed and unhealed heart. When did the child die? Thirty-five years ago, and the agony seemed as keen and unbearable as if it had occurred that very day. Far be it from me to take from the sadness of any life its sanctity, or seem to mock any spirit's grief ; but I will hold that the soul that has loved will always love, and there can be no forgetting.

BETTER BE A MAN THAN A GOD.

Do you know I would rather be a man than a god? I would rather have the opportunities this life gives, with its chance of development and growth, with its joy alternating with its pain, with its ineffable glory of loving and being loved, than to be a god and sit on the eternal circle of the universe and not know the possibility of growth and development, or be capable of being touched by the thrill and rapture that this world knows. It is not, after all, a bad proposition, the human world with all its mingled story of laughter and of tears. Our business is to dignify it, to exalt it, and justify our existence to ourselves and incidentally to the world ; to make the common deed of the common day worthy of man ; to lift up oneself above the ignoble and the mean, and the wisdom of doing it is with everyone.

Emerson is speaking of the great fact of the dignity of life when, in his peculiar phrase, he says : "Hitch your wagon to a star." It may be that a man accustomed to drive four-footed animals along a dusty road would find some difficulty in attaching his wagon to one of the stellar worlds, but he could hitch it at least to his animals and drive his dirt wagon along the street like a king if he only feels like one. I deny to circumstance the right to degrade a human soul. I take the crown, the only crown of real worth or real value this world ever knew, and reach it to every toiler's brow. I would, if I could, make the human thought take change and death

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as the servants and ministers of life; I would, if I could, put the glory of being into the gloom of the passing day. In the divine right of existence, in the divine right of being, I would defy what men call death and claim immortality now.

—*Truthseeker* (New York). (DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

A Significant Statement.

(Extract from Preface to the new (second) edition of "The Golden Bough," by J. G. Frazer.)

THE position of the anthropologist of to-day resembles in some sort the position of classical scholars at the revival of learning. To these men the rediscovery of ancient literature came like a revelation, disclosing to their wondering eyes a splendid vision of the antique world, such as the cloistered student of the Middle Ages never dreamed of under the gloomy shadow of the minster and within the sound of its solemn bells. To us moderns a still wider vista is vouchsafed, a greater panorama is unrolled by the study which aims at bringing home to us the faith and the practice, the hopes and the ideals, not of two highly gifted races only, but of all mankind, and thus enabling us to follow the long march, the slow and toilsome ascent, of humanity from savagery to civilisation. And as the scholar of the Renascence found not merely food for thought, but a new field of labor, in the dusty and faded manuscripts of Greece and Rome, so in the mass of materials that is steadily pouring in from many sides—from buried cities of remotest antiquity as well as from the rudest savages of the desert and the jungle—we of to-day must recognise a new province of knowledge, which will task the energies of generations of students to master. The study is still in its rudiments, and what we do now will have to be done over again and done better, with fuller knowledge and deeper insight, by those who come after us. To recur to a metaphor which I have already made use of, we of this age are only pioneers hewing lanes and clearings in the forest where others will hereafter sow and reap.

But the comparative study of the beliefs and institutions of mankind is fitted to be much more than a means of satisfying an enlightened curiosity, and of furnishing materials for the researches of the learned. Well handled, it may become a powerful instrument to expedite progress if it lays bare certain weak spots in the foundations on which modern society is built—if it shows that much which we are wont to regard as solid rests on the sands of superstition rather than on the rock of nature. It is, indeed, a melancholy, and in some respects thankless, task to strike at the foundations of beliefs in which, as in a strong tower, the hopes and aspirations of humanity through long ages have sought a refuge from the storm and stress of life. Yet sooner or later it is inevitable that the battery of the comparative method should breach these venerable walls, mantled over with the ivy and mosses and wild flowers of a thousand tender and sacred associations. At present we are only dragging the guns into position; they have hardly yet begun to speak. The task of building up into fairer and more enduring forms the old structures so rudely shattered is reserved for other hands, perhaps for other and happier ages. We cannot foresee, we can hardly even guess, the new forms into which thought and society will run in the future. Yet this uncertainty ought not to induce us, from any consideration of expediency or regard for antiquity, to spare the ancient moulds, however beautiful, when these are proved to be outworn. Whatever comes of it, wherever it leads us, we must follow truth alone. It is our only guiding star (*hoc signo vinces*).

A Story by General Palmer.

The late General John M. Palmer used to enjoy telling of being mistaken for a person of greater dignity than the President of the United States.

"When I was Military Governor of Kentucky," said he, "a disturbance occurred in some town in the interior. I was at a distance, but was needed at the scene. There was no train, no carriage, no buggy to be got. The only vehicle available was a big gilded circus chariot, left by some stranded show company. I didn't like it; but there was nothing left to do, so I got in. You may imagine I cut a great dash as I drove through a small town. People turned out in droves to see me pass. When I left the town behind me and reached the plantations, the negroes saw me, and stared with open mouths. They followed me at a respectful distance, until presently they were joined by an old, white-haired preacher, who, on seeing me in my magnificent chariot, raised his eyes and his arms on high, and, in a voice that stirred all within hearing, cried:—

"'Bress de Lord, de day of judgment am cum, an' dis gemman am de Angel Gabriel hisself. Breden, down on yo' knees an pray, fo' yo' hour am hyar!'"

—*Chicago Chronicle.*

Correspondence.

A NOTE ON THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I beg to forward my tiny mite for the Twentieth Century Fund. Its smallness makes me blush, but still, I suppose, it's better than nothing.

The reluctance of many of your subscribers to "shell out" gives me constant surprise. They cannot, I feel sure, realise the gravity of the issues at stake, or they would make greater efforts to place our organisation on a firmer basis. They cannot, I am convinced, understand what a thin flooring of safety separates us from the hell of religious persecution beneath, nor gauge the stupendous force of public apathy co-ordinated with clerical activity.

I am aware that most of our party are poor, but I don't believe that poverty is responsible for the slow growth of our Twentieth Century Fund. Many cannot "afford" to contribute, I know. Well, I can't afford to, but I'm going to contribute and "afford" the contribution afterwards. I think the real reason why funds don't roll in is the disease fatal to all enterprises attacked by it—apathy.

When one considers that many of us, for prudential reasons, are unable to take an active share in the movement, there is more food for amazement that the passive members are not more willing to assist in the only possible way, financially.

I have not much respect for the man who reads through his *Freethinker*, and then shoves it away and forgets all about Freethought until the following Thursday; who can't tell what last week's *Freethinker* contained, and who probably doesn't care; and whose ideas are so nebulous that he seeks refuge from would-be Christian controversialists in a haze of "don't know."

If a person's convictions are not sufficiently acute to prick him into self-denial for the sake of his cause, they are not worth the proverbial tinker's damn. The half-hearted response to your appeal is a poor compliment to your own splendid efforts and constant abnegation of self for the sake of the movement you adorn and so largely sustain.

C. D. STEPHENS.

"Le Raison" Fund.

OWING to the death of our friend, Mr. Samuel Hartmann, who was the treasurer for this fund, the post has become vacant. Mr. Victor Roger, one of our vice-presidents, has consented to act in that capacity. Subscriptions, etc., intended for that fund should be addressed to him at 114 Kennington-road, S.E.

I should like to add that shares in the new paper are ten francs each = 8s. 4d. WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Education.

Politics is an after-work, a poor patching. We are always a little late. The evil is done, the law is passed, and we begin the uphill agitation for repeal of that of which we ought to have prevented the enacting. We shall one day learn to supersede politics by education. What we call our root-and-branch reforms of slavery, war, gambling, intemperance, is only medicating the symptoms. We must begin higher up—namely, in education.—*Emerson.*

Newspapers.

If a man has not read the newspapers for some months, and then reads them all together, he will find out how much time is wasted upon this class of literature. The world has always been divided into parties, and these divisions are especially marked at the present time; and whenever any doubtful state of things arises, the journalist flatters either the one or the other party to a certain extent, and feeds the inner inclination or antipathy, as the case may be, from day to day, until at length a decision is arrived at, and the outcome is regarded with amazement, as though it were of divine origin.—*Goethe.*

The Folly of Women.

It is always a surprise to me that women will sit year after year and be told that, because of a story as silly and childish as it is unjust, she is responsible for all the ills of life; that because, forsooth, some thousands of years ago a woman was so horribly wicked as to eat an apple, she must, and should, occupy a humble and penitent position, and remain forever subject to the dictates of ecclesiastical pretenders. It is so silly, so childish, that for people of sense to accept it seems almost incredible.—*Helen H. Gardener.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Faith and Freethought in the Old Century and the New."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Missions to the Heathen."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 7, J. W. Cox.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, H. P. Ward. For particulars see *Birmingham Daily Mail*, December 29.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): No meeting.

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, J. White, "Utopias."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Mrs. Bruce Glasier, "The Dearth of Joy."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): New Year's Day Annual Soirée—Tea at 5.30, to be followed by entertainment; dancing at 8.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, W. A. Lill, Original Poetical and Prose Readings

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A reading.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—December 30, Camberwell.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—December 30, Birmingham.

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