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NATURAL MORALITY.

A Sketch of Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction. By M. Guyau. Translated from the French by Gertrude Kapteyn. (London: Watts & Co.)

JEAN-MARIE GUYAU was born on October 28, 1854. At the age of twenty his health broke down. For the rest of his short life—he died at thirty-three—he was more or less an invalid, residing on the shores of the Mediterranean. His first work was written at the early age of nineteen, and was "crowned" by the Academy of Moral and Political Science. It was a careful study of the Utilitarian moralists from Epicurus to the school of Bentham, and was afterwards expanded into two separate treatises. His pen was very active during the time allowed him to think and write. Amongst the several books he published were three which have been translated into English. The principal of these, Guyau's masterpiece, is the *Irreligion of the Future*. We reviewed it at considerable length, in the pages of *Progress*, on its first appearance in French. The English translation, which is ridiculously expensive, was published about twelve months ago. *Education and Heredity*, translated by W. J. Greenstreet, was published in the "Contemporary Science Series" in 1891. Now we have a translation of Guyau's chief ethical treatise by Gertrude Kapteyn. This remarkable writer is therefore accessible to English readers who wish to master his leading ideas.

Guyau was something more than a philosopher, in the ordinary meaning of the word. He wrote a little volume of verses that proved him to be a genuine poet. This aspect of his genius gives a delightful tone to his prose writings. The literary flavor of every page distinguishes him from the common run of writers on philosophy. He is never at a loss for appropriate and illuminating imagery. And the result is not only charming, but stimulating. Guyau's appeal is not merely to the intellect, which he does not undervalue, but to the whole mind, including the imagination, which gives wings to the intellect, and changes plodding into soaring.

Let us take an illustration, almost at haphazard. Guyau has been speaking of self-sacrifice as often the highest assertion of life, while apparently its negation. One moment of your life may be so intense and noble that all the rest may seem colorless and empty.

"There are hours in which the intensity of life is so great that, placed in balance with the whole possible series of years, these hours will turn the scale. One passes three days in climbing to a high summit of the Alps; one finds that the short moment passed on the white summit, in the great calm of the sky, is worth these three days of fatigue. There are also moments in life when we seem to be on the mountain-top—when we soar; compared with these moments everything else becomes indifferent."

Scores, perhaps hundreds of such similes, may be found in this little volume. Guyau reasons like a mathematician and writes like a poet.

But before we go further let us say a few words about the English translation. Here and there we have marked a bit of slipshod, but on the whole the work is admirably well done. It might have been a little more idiomatic with advantage. Now and then the French phrase is translated rather than translated into English. But the author's meaning always seems adequately conveyed; and, after all, that is the point of greatest importance.

No. 891.

One-third of Guyau's book consists of an elaborate Introduction, in which he discusses the current metaphysics of morality. Optimism, he asserts, is really based upon religious ideas. God is looking after the affairs of the universe, and everything must be for the best. Even if they appear to be otherwise, there is the doctrine of immortality to supply the explanation. What is crooked now will be put straight hereafter, what is confused will be made orderly, what is dark will be made clear. Death brings the solution of all mysteries. Yes, says Guyau, but is it not a fact, after all, that God is little more than the hypothetical guarantee of this very immortality?

"In reality, humanity cares little enough about God; not one martyr would have sacrificed himself for that recluse of the skies. What was looked for in him was the power to make us immortal. Man has always been wanting to scale the heavens, and he cannot do it quite alone. He has invented God in order that God may stretch out a hand to him; next he attached himself in love to this divine Savior. But if to-morrow one were to say to the four hundred millions of Christians, 'There is no God; there is only a paradise, a man-Christ, a virgin mother, and saints,' they would very quickly be consoled."

The ethical vice of optimism is that it encourages supineness, content, and callousness. If everything is for the best, the passion for reform is both blasphemous and ridiculous. Pessimism is as false as optimism, for the persistence of life proves that it contains a balance of satisfaction. Nevertheless, the pessimist may well be more moral than the optimist. He rebels against the evils of life, and if he cannot hope to make it happy he may try to make it less miserable. The truth lies in the third hypothesis of the indifference of nature. Man gives her an aim, conceived from his own wishes. But she has no aim. She is infinite and inexhaustible. Nothing is fixed, all is fluid. Man is but one of her productions. The time was when he was not, and the time is coming when he will not be. She existed without him once, and she will exist without him again. It is useless to say "Conform to nature." We do not know what this nature is. What we are sure of is her indifference to man's aims and aspirations. Yet there is such a thing as natural morality, in the sense of an ethic based upon the laws and conditions of human life.

Guyau's sketch of this natural morality—without religious obligation or metaphysical sanction—is a fine performance. The reader may not find it convincing; he must find it suggestive. Guyau is a Utilitarian in the sense that he believes morality to be purely social in its origin and development. But he denies that human activity is exercised for the sake of happiness. "Life," he says, "unfolds and expresses itself in activity because it is life. In all creatures pleasure accompanies, much more than it provokes, the search after life. Before all we must live; enjoyment comes after." Life becomes moral by an inevitable necessity as it intensifies and expands. It has a power of fecundity as well as of self-preservation. This finds its first outlet in generation. Then follows a fecundity of intellect, of sensibility, of emotion, and of will; and all this is impossible except under the forms of sociability. Finally, ideas of ethical possibility arise, and these necessarily tend to realise themselves. They become psychological forces. "I ought, therefore I will," is a less potent formula than "I can, therefore I must." One is always impelled to fulfil the possibilities of one's nature.

Guyau is rigorously logical. Dismissing the idea of

duty, he discovers its equivalent in the forces of life. Not only is the most intense and energetic man in the main the most sociable man, but human beings love risk as well as enjoyment; and this, we may remark in passing, is at the root of a great deal of gambling, which is too generally supposed to spring merely from a desire to obtain other people's money. There is a certain charm to strong natures in danger. It calls forth their energies and capacities. It makes them live intensely, and intense life is always a delight. Guyau observes that intrepidity and self-sacrifice, even in the face of the final risk of death, is "not a mere negation of self and of personal life; it is this life itself raised into sublimity." Everything, in short, which unites the individual to his species, and makes him subserve its interests, has its root in nature, and is susceptible of a rational explanation.

Dealing with the *penal* side of morality, Guyau remarks that punishment sprang originally from the useful animal instinct of self-defence, which took the form of attack upon aggression. A caress elicits a caress, a bite provokes a bite. Retaliation is at bottom a sound instinct. When a boy says, "He hit me first," he gives what for him is an excellent reason. But when intelligence comes to the aid of instinct, we learn that retaliation is a useless expenditure of force. We content ourselves with simple defence, and we even become capable of pitying the offender. Crime should therefore be dealt with in a social spirit. We should treat it as we now treat leprosy or insanity. "Charity for all men," Guyau says, "whatever may be their moral, intellectual, or physical worth, should be the final aim to be pursued even by public opinion." Humanity must not follow the bad example of Christianity, and set up a social doctrine of grace and election. God, if he exist, only damns himself in damning a sinner. From his height the outcasts should never be anything but unfortunates. The very heart of morality is pity or compassion. Higher than any Western prayer (we may add) is the great Eastern prayer: "O God, be merciful to the wicked. Thou hast already been merciful to the good."

G. W. FOOTE.

SECULAR AND THEOLOGICAL FORCES.

FOR untold ages two prominent forces have been in operation in the realms of human thought. They are known as secular and theological. The one belongs to man, the other is said to pertain to God. Each has played an important part, for good or for evil, in moulding and regulating the human mind. Invariably the two forces have been in conflict with each other, and frequently the good achieved by the one has been checked, and sometimes entirely counteracted, by the evil wrought by the other. It was thus during the period known as the "Dark Ages." And even to-day what is the ethical condition of the masses, who exist in the midst of an extensive theological propaganda? Read the records of the police-courts, and the vice and depravity which are constantly being made known through the medium of the newspapers. Visit the rural districts of "Christian" England, and the painful fact will be too apparent, that thousands of its inhabitants are sunk into the deepest ignorance and most depraved wretchedness. Theological teachings can have had but little influence for good upon the morals of a people when we find that, after centuries of the rule, discipline, teaching, and example of the many clergymen, besides dissenting ministers, the very classes of society which have been most under their control are the greatest stigma upon our social condition. The lesson of history is that when the force of theology was at its highest pitch morality was at its lowest ebb, while falsehood, fraud, and general licentiousness prevailed even amongst professed Christians. Hence the orthodox writer, Dr. Gregory, in his *History of the Christian Church*, states that as early as the second century the Christians considered that "it was lawful to deceive in order to advance the history of religion.....many of the practices encouraged by the Christians of the fourth century were far from conducing either to piety or good morals." He adds that in the ninth century "the priests and monks, in order to avoid perishing through hunger, abandoned themselves to the practice of violence, fraud, and every species of crime" (vol. i., pp. 85, 176, and 467). The pious Mosheim also admits that for many centuries the Christians

were guilty of "lying, deceit, artifice, fraud," and numerous other vices. He tells us that "the Church was contaminated with shoals of profligate Christians.....It cannot be affirmed that even true Christians were entirely innocent and irreproachable in this matter" (see Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. i., pp. 55, 77, 102, 193). Salvian, a clergyman of the fifth century, writes: "With the exception of a very few who flee from vice, what is almost every Christian congregation but a sink of vices? For you will find in the Church scarcely one who is not either a drunkard, a glutton, or an adulterer.....or a robber, or a man-slayer, and, what is worse than all, almost all these without limit" (Miall's *Memorials of Early Christianity*, p. 366). And Dr. Cave, in his *Primitive Christianity* (p. 2), observes: "If a modest and honest heathen were to estimate Christianity by the lives of its professors, he would certainly proscribe it as the vilest religion in the world." Referring to a subsequent period, Wesley gives the following picture of society as it existed under the influence of theology. After stating that "Bible-reading England" was guilty of every species of vice, even those that nature itself abhors, he says: "Such a complication of villainies of every kind considered with all their aggravations, such a scorn of whatever bears the face of virtue; such injustice, fraud, and falsehood; above all, such perjury, and such a method of law, we may defy the whole world to produce" (Sermons, vol. xii., p. 223).

Such was the condition of the community when theology was in full force. Those persons who desire to extol the power of theology for good will have to account for the fact that when it had the opportunity of exhibiting its legitimate influence the general welfare of the people made little or no headway. It was not until secular agencies supplanted the influence of theology that national progress really commenced. If the reader has any doubt as to the accuracy of this statement, he should read carefully vol. ii. of Lecky's *European Morals* and Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, and he will there find ample evidence of the truth of our allegation. As Lecky observes: "During more than three centuries the decadence of theological influence has been one of the most invariable signs and measures of our progress" (p. 18). Not less significant is Buckle's testimony as to the beneficial force of the great secular factor of scepticism. "The more," says he, "we examine this great principle of scepticism, the more distinctly shall we see the immense part it has played in the progress of European civilisation. To state in general terms what in this introduction will be fully proved, it may be said that to scepticism we owe that spirit of inquiry which, during the last two centuries, has gradually encroached on every possible subject; has reformed every department of practical and speculative knowledge; has weakened the authority of the privileged classes, and thus placed liberty on a surer foundation; has chastised the despotism of princes; has restrained the arrogance of the nobles, and has even diminished the prejudices of the clergy. In a word, it is this which has remedied the three fundamental errors of the olden time; errors which made the people, in politics too confiding, in science too credulous, in religion too intolerant."

Let us take another historical illustration of the superior force of secular agencies over those of theology. Some writers have made it the great reproach of the reign of Charles II. that it was "godless"; but the fact is, its godlessness was the one redeeming trait of that "Merry Monarch's" reign. Reckless as he was, during his reign reforms were accomplished the results of which cannot be too highly appreciated. It was during his reign that a law was passed which deprived the bishops of the power to burn those who differed from them in theological opinion. It was during his reign that the clergy were deprived of the privilege of arranging their own taxation, and were compelled to submit to the ordinary mode of assessment. It was during his reign that a law was passed forbidding bishops to administer the oath by which the Church had hitherto compelled suspected persons to criminate themselves. It was during his reign that it was settled that the taxation of the people should be decided by their own representatives, and it was during his reign that certain restrictions on the press were removed, whereby knowledge had a better opportunity of being disseminated among the masses of the people. Notwithstanding the calamities occasioned by the great Plague and the Fire of London, more improvements, says Buckle, were

effected and more progress was made during this reign than had been accomplished during the twelve previous centuries of English history. The character of Charles II., as a whole, was one not to be emulated; but, living amidst a profligate court, venal ministers, and constant conspiracies, he was enabled to recognise two great obstacles to the nation's welfare; these obstacles were the spiritual tyranny of the priests and the territorial oppression of the nobles. Having but little regard for theological dogmas, he was determined that such evils should be swept away. If additional proofs are required in favor of our contention, they are furnished in the recently-published work, *The Wonderful Century*, by Alfred Russel Wallace. It is therein shown that during the present century, which is pre-eminently a secular age, more solid progress has been accomplished than was achieved in all previous ages, when theology was paramount and unrestrained. We call the special attention of the expounders of "Christian evidences" to the truths here recorded, inasmuch as they demonstrate the utter fallacy of the Christian claims on behalf of the force of theological teachings.

Despite these facts, orthodox writers still indulge the delusion that theology is essential to human advancement, and that secular teaching, even when allied with moral culture, is impotent in the promotion of personal and national welfare. Hence, in a book recently issued, *The Return to the Cross*, by the Rev. Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll, we read: "Rely upon it that the people of Wales, who have listened to the noblest pulpit eloquence in the world, do not ask from you secular teaching.....No teaching that is purely ethical or intellectual, or the result of the exercise of the human reason, will do other than lay waste the supernatural Church.....All human imaginings and suppositions are as idle as the chattering of sparrows" (pp. 12, 13, and 15). Here is the great theological error that permeates most of the orthodox literature. Human effort is depreciated and robbed of its intrinsic vitality. It is true "the exercise of the human reason" may lay waste the pretensions of "the supernatural," but it does more; it discovers and consolidates all those agencies which exalt personal character and augment the happiness and well-being of a nation. As we have shown from the pages of history, it is to the secular, not to the theological, force that we are indebted for the progress that has been made through all time towards civilisation.

CHARLES WATTS.

IRRATIONAL RATIONALISM.

If the English people represented a community in whose life supernaturalism played no part, where stories of gods and ghosts, of heaven and hell, were regarded as furnishing material only for the student of folk-lore or the mental pathologist; if, in brief, society had been completely rationalised, then Mr. Gould's criticism on my article of July 31 would be as incontrovertible as the article itself would have been unnecessary. But, as we happen to be living in a community where such a condition of affairs does not obtain, but the very reverse, I cannot but regard the objections raised as being somewhat wide of the mark. Indeed, the chief fault I have to find with Mr. Gould is that he writes without the least reference to the obvious dangers surrounding the retention of the Bible in the schools, so long as it is regarded by the majority of the population as a revelation from God to man.

My contention was a very simple one. The Bible represents the only official and authoritative form of supernaturalism that Freethinkers in England have to face. The clergy and the whole of the Christian Church regard that book as the sole foundation of their claims; our social institutions, legal procedure, and daily lives are more or less tainted with this conception of the Bible, and these circumstances alone lift it from the ranks of ordinary literature, and render it necessary to deal with it as a class apart. Mr. Gould's counter-contention is that the Bible is to him only ordinary literature. Granted; it is only ordinary literature to me; but Mr. Gould must see that the Moral Instruction League was not founded to deal with people who take that view of the matter, but for the much larger class who will not and cannot regard the Bible in the same light without at the same time surrendering their position as Christians. It is, therefore, the

claims put forward on behalf of the Bible that we have to attack if we would not stultify our understanding and impair our work.

I do not see that Mr. Gould anywhere faces this simple position, except to say that the League only advocates the use of the Bible as one among other books, and upon the same grounds. Mr. Gould will excuse my saying that a resolution of the League does not alter the existing condition of affairs. A "pious opinion" that the Bible is only as other books is well enough when Mr. Gould and myself are concerned, but when we come out into the world of strife, and have to buckle on our armor to smite the advocate of Bible-worship, then so long as attack and defence are necessary the Bible is not on the same level as other books. It can only be that when its present position is destroyed; and when that is accomplished the necessity for a Moral Instruction League will have ceased to exist.

Mr. Gould's plea for the use of the Bible "on Freethought principles" is strangely negative. I am asked, "Why should we not use the Bible in elementary schools?" Surely the first question should be, "What reason is there for including the Bible in the list of books drawn up for the teacher's guidance?" The fact that the Bible is already in the schools is, to my mind, a very strong reason for putting it out. For it has been there under evil auspices; it has been the creator of evil influences; and it is certainly not worth while, to a Freethinker, retaining a book with such dangerous associations for the small amount of good that might be derived from its perusal.

Mr. Gould may reply that, dissociated from supernaturalism, one can get many good things from the Bible. I have no doubt that an expert in the art of deducing moral lessons from non-moral, or immoral, narratives might get good from any book under the sun; but that is surely hardly sufficient ground for recommending every volume for the special guidance of teachers. It would be pretty easy to show that, even as a book, when one has divested Biblical stories of their coating of superstition, separated myth from fact, and faced the risk of encouraging the efforts of supernaturalists, the amount of good teaching fit for children that could be obtained would scarcely be worth the trouble of getting it.

My critic fails to see any reason for the exclusion of the Bible, and asks: "May he (the teacher) not point to Abraham's treatment of Lot as a case of magnanimity..... to Moses as an example of a pioneer's devotion to his cause..... to the democratic significance of a legend which represents a hero as born in a stable and laid in a manger?" etc., etc. Now I think that, even upon the bare statement of the matter, a strong case against these stories might be raised by pointing to the inability of extreme youth to distinguish between history and myth, and the consequent mental confusion generated; but when we reflect, further, that these incidents are treated by the current religion as historic verities; that, above all, the "hero born in a manger" is regarded by the majority of people as "very God of very God"; that the story of his birth, life, and death is so closely interwoven with supernatural occurrences as to be almost inseparable, that belief in him is said to be of the most profound importance here and hereafter, and that millions of pounds are spent annually in the training of men and women to perpetuate these beliefs, then I say emphatically that whatever good might be derived from the "democratic significance of the legend" would be far outweighed by the evil inflicted in the direction of preparing the child for the superstition of the outer world. It is simply growing the harvest for the parson to reap.

I am not quite clear as to the manner in which Freethought will "have lost a chance" if the Bible is excluded from elementary schools. Mr. Gould says the clergy will still proclaim the Bible as the "word of God." Of course they will; it is their business to do so. There is nothing more impressive in that than there is in Beecham advertising his pills. The proclamation will be made in any case, only it seems to me that the strength of the proclamation will be increased a hundred-fold by the scholar's knowledge that he is being fed with illustrations drawn from the Bible, and that it is one of the books which the Education Department regard as so important to the child's moral and intellectual welfare as not to be omitted on any account.

It is not as if the teacher were authorised to warn his scholars that the Bible is on the same level as any other book, worse than some, better than others, and full of the

errors, violence, and crime inseparable from early civilisation. The teacher's knowledge on this head must be kept carefully to himself; the book is to be utilised in the schools without any attempt being made to correct the false views of the Bible entertained by the outside world, in most cases by the child's own parents. And against the absence of any plain statement from the teacher as to the real nature of the Bible there is to be placed the active operations of the religious world, impressing upon the child untruthful and dangerous views of a book that has already been favorably introduced to it by Quixotic Rationalists. It surely ill becomes Freethinkers to strengthen the forces of Irrationalism in such a manner.

Mr. Gould's next contention, that the exclusion of the Bible is impracticable, because many of its legends are accessible in general literature, does not strike me as possessing very great strength, for three reasons. First of all, if a teacher is so determined upon giving his scholars instruction in Biblical legends as to rush to ordinary literature when warned off the Bible, the evil influence of such a man—granting has appointment as a teacher—will certainly be augmented if you place in his hands, as an official recommendation, a book which he will doubtless regard as the fountain-head of these legends. So that even here the exclusion of the Bible will be something gained. It will minimise the supernaturalism, even if it does not destroy it.

Secondly, it is not the mere repetition of a legend, as such, that we have to guard against. Childhood is naturally fetishistic, and satisfies its cravings in various directions. Children hear the story of *Puss in Boots* or *Jack the Giant-killer* time after time without retaining a belief in the reality of either through their lives. None of these stories are supported by the public sense or by social intercourse, and they drop off quite naturally as the child approaches maturity. What renders the Biblical stories specially dangerous is the fact that they are supported by the public sense, or lack of it, directly and indirectly; the daily intercourse of life enforces a belief in their truthfulness, and therefore, as both Mr. Gould and myself believe it one of the functions of education to arm the child against possible errors in after life, if we cannot warn the child at school against the Bible, let us at least put it on one side altogether.

And, finally, Mr. Gould, in his closing paragraph, effectually knocks the bottom out of his own argument. If effective Government control can and does secure that the education given under its directions shall be thoroughly secular, with the Bible in the school, it will surely be as easy to see that the education continues to be secular when the Bible is excluded. Mr. Gould himself, then, supplies evidence that the teacher, after being warned off the Bible, will not be allowed to drag in the Gadarene pigs from Huxley, the Ark from Colenso, or the Fall of Man from Milton.

I do not think, after what I have written above, that Mr. Adams's letter calls for any special reply. Mr. Adams believes that "it is more important to get systematic moral instruction into the schools than to get the Bible out, and if the former is attained the latter will be much easier." Mr. Adams's method is simplicity itself. Get systematic moral instruction, free from supernaturalism, established in the schools, and then quietly inform the supporters of the Bible that there is no time and no inclination to attend to their client. Excellent! only the Bible is *already* in the schools, it is in possession, its advocates are watchful and more keenly alive to everything that affects their interest than are, I am afraid, many Rationalists to theirs; and if Mr. Adams believes that he can get systematic non-theological moral instruction introduced into the schools before he has got the Bible out, I can only congratulate him upon the simplicity of his plan, while at the same time insisting upon the impossibility of its realisation. C. COHEN.

The executive of the Legitimation League will be glad to learn that the League propaganda has met with favor in the South Sea Islands. The following is a specimen of a marriage certificate of an illicit union common in that region: "This is to certify that —, daughter of —, is illegally married to Mr. — for one week, and Mr. — is at liberty to send her to hell when he pleases. —, Witness.

MILTON'S PLEA FOR LIBERTY.

(Concluded from page 523.)

THE Committee of Printing were, in fact, a new censorship. This novel licensing board was appointed by Parliament in June, 1643, to "prevent and suppress the license of printing"; in other words, to prevent the diffusion of Royalist tracts and journals. The Ordinance declared that no "Book, Pamphlet, Paper, nor part of any such Book, Pamphlet, or Paper, shall from henceforth be printed, bound, stitched, or put to sale by any person or persons whatsoever, unless the same be first approved of and licensed under the hand of such person or persons as both or either of the said Houses shall appoint for the licensing of the same, and entered in the Register Book of the Company of Stationers according to ancient custom." The Wardens of that Company, and certain officers of Parliament, were ordered to ferret out contraband literature, and to bring the writers, printers, publishers, and dispersers before either of the Houses or the Committee of Examinations. Justices of the Peace, Captains, and Constables were to assist in this laudable work, to apprehend offenders, and, in cases of opposition, to break open doors and locks.

Within a week after the passing of this Ordinance the licensers were appointed. Divinity, being a burning question, was thought to need the service of twelve examiners. Seven of them, if not eight, were members of the Westminster Assembly, and all the rest were parish ministers in or near London.* These were good securities for orthodoxy, and Milton had excellent reason for thinking that "New presbyter is but old priest writ large." Miscellaneous literature was handed over to three other licensers; law-books to certain Judges and the Serjeants-at-Law; mathematical books, almanacks, and prognostications to a Reader of Gresham College, or a certain Mr. Booker, who was perhaps thought to be skilled in the black art; and "small pamphlets, portraitures, pictures, and the like" to the Clerk of the Stationers' Company.

These licensers went to work, and the result was that, while only 35 books were registered in the first half of 1643, no less than 333 were registered in the second half. Yet the new law was defied by several publishers, and among them Milton's. After the petition of the Stationers' Company in 1644, both Houses of Parliament assisted in strengthening the law, but prosecutions were stayed by Cromwell's great Toleration motion which passed the Commons on September 13, and "caused a sudden pause among the Presbyterian zealots," being, indeed, "a demand generally for clearer air and breathing-room for everybody, more of English freedom and less of Scottish inquisitorship."† The Scotch were, in fact, carrying their "guid conceit o' theirsels" too far. They joined England in the revolt against their Stuart king, but fancied they could bind England afresh in their Presbyterian chains. Eventually they saw their mistake, but it was not until Oliver Cromwell had frightfully pounded them at Preston, Dunbar, and Worcester.

Milton's natural bent was "beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies," but he loved liberty sincerely, and knew that she and truth were inseparable twins. For this reason he had avoided the Church, for which his parents destined him, perceiving that "he who would take orders must subscribe slave," and preferring "a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking bought and begun with servitude and forswearing." For this reason also he had joined in the controversial fray, forsaking poetry for the "cool element of prose," and undertaking tasks wherein, as he himself says, he had the use but of his "left hand." And now for the same reason Milton forged on the strong anvil of his mind a new thunderbolt of freedom. Utterly repellent to his broad spirit was the notion of handing all the wits and thinkers in England over to the tutelage of a body of orthodox gentlemen, who were empowered to stifle the offspring of laborious brains, and to act as mental abortionists. On November 24, 1644, appeared his *Areopagitica*, "A Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, to the Parliament of England." The book bore the name of no printer or publisher; in defiance of old laws and new, it was unregistered and unlicensed. The title-page bore

* Masson's *Life of Milton*, vol. iii., p. 270.

† Masson, iii., 275.

four lines from Milton's favorite "Euripides," which he rendered into English as follows:—

This is true Liberty, when free-born men
Having to advise the public may speak free,
Which he who can, and will, deserves high praise,
Who neither can, nor will, may hold his peace;
What can be juster in a state than this?

It was a fashion of that time to give Greek names to books. Milton's title was borrowed from an oration of Isocrates, addressed to the Areopagus of Athens.

Professor Masson says he has "sometimes been angry" at the public choice of the *Areopagitica* as the one of Milton's pamphlets "by which to recollect him as an English prose-writer." Yet, if a choice must be made, how could there be a better? It is, as Professor Masson allows, "the most skilful of all Milton's prose-writings, the most equable and sustained, the easiest to be read straight through at once, the fittest to leave one glowing sensation of the power of the author's genius." Certainly it is the *Areopagitica* which most fully justifies Macaulay's eulogy of Milton's prose-writings. "As compositions," he says, "they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery."*

Milton opens with a handsomely turned compliment to the Parliament. Allowing that the Commonwealth ought to have a vigilant eye on books—of which more anon—he recommends wariness, for "as good almost kill a man as kill a good book." True, no age can restore a life, yet "revolutions of ages do not often recover the loss of a rejected truth." Readers of Mill's *Essay on Liberty* may remember how he elaborates this striking truth.

Next, an appeal is made to history. Licensing was unknown to the ancients, and even Constantine and his successors only condemned books to be burnt after they were "examined, refuted, and condemned in the general councils." According to Milton, this discipline was not more severe than what was formerly in practice; but the voice of history is against him on this point. When he rushes on to the policy of the Popes he reaches firmer ground. The Papacy and the Inquisition were safer objects of attack than the early Church, and Milton baits them mercilessly, laughing at their "purgatory of an index," and mocking their last invention of ordaining that no book should be printed "unless it were approved and licensed under the hands of two or three gluttonous friars." This is followed by a specimen of their *imprimatur*. "Sometimes," says Milton in a rollicking vein, "five imprimaturs are seen together, dialogue wise, in the piazza of one title-page, complimenting and ducking to each other with their shaven reverences, whether the author, who stands by in perplexity at the foot of his epistle, shall to the press or to the sponge."

Knowing his audience, and having a personal inclination that way, Milton quotes from Scripture, dwelling especially on Paul's "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," and "To the pure all things are pure." Knowledge cannot defile unless the will and conscience are defiled already. Besides, good and evil grow up inseparably in the field of this world. Virtue consists in seeing and knowing, and yet abstaining. Ignorance is not innocence. "I cannot praise," he exclaims, "a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat."

Milton then proceeds to examine the alleged mischiefs of free printing and free reading. If the spread of infection be feared, the censorship will have to be very drastic; the Bible itself will have to be removed, "for that oftentimes relates blasphemy not nicely, it brings in holiest men of wicked men not unelegantly, it brings in holiest men passionately murmuring against Providence through all the arguments of Epicurus"; and for these causes the Bible was put by the Papists in the first rank of prohibited books. Besides, if the English press be gagged, objectionable foreign books will creep in, and these will be read by the learned, who will distil their poison for the illiterate. Learned men must therefore be most closely fenced round,

and to do this the licensers must assume "the grace of infallibility." This capital point has also been enforced by Mill. Further, such restraint will lead to "the fall of learning and of all ability in disputation." This is obviously unjust. Why should one man wear a strait waistcoat because another is mad? "If it be true," says Milton, "that a wise man, like a good refiner, can gather gold out of the drossiest volume, and that a fool will be a fool with the best book, yea, or without a book; there is no reason that we should deprive a wise man of any advantage to his wisdom, while we seek to restrain from a fool that which, being restrained, will be no hindrance to his folly."

Why also, Milton asks, should we stop at books? All our surroundings influence us, and to be consistent the State must meddle everywhere.

"If we think to regulate printing, thereby to rectify manners, we must regulate all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightful to man. No music must be heard, no song must be set or sung, but what is grave and Doric. There must be licensing dances, that no gestures, motion, or deportment be taught our youth, but what by their allowance shall be thought honest; for such Plato was provided of. It will task more than the work of twenty licensers to examine all the lutes, the violins, and the guitars in every house; they must not be suffered to prattle as they do, but must be licensed what they may say. And who shall silence all the airs and madrigals that whisper softness in chambers?"

And so on for a couple of pages. "Reason is but choosing," Milton finely says, and you cannot remove more than a fraction of life's temptations by the most rigid censorship. Besides, virtue consists in motive, and depriving men of all opportunity of evil would not rob them of their evil inclinations. "Though ye take from a covetous man all his treasure," says Milton, "he has yet one jewel left; ye cannot bereave him of his covetousness."

As for the "preventing of schism," Milton reminds the Parliament that Christianity itself was once a schism, and the licenser who is "to sit upon the birth or death of books" needs more than human wisdom never to suppress the truth in his prevention of error. Ten to one he will stifle all novelties, and every truth is a novelty at first. "The hide-bound humor which he calls his judgment" will let him pass nothing but "what is vulgarly received already." For this reason Sir Francis Bacon said that "such authorised books are but the language of the times." Licensing treats learned men like children; it is a burden on "the hapless race of men whose misfortune it is to have understanding," and it is also "an undervaluing and vilifying of the whole nation."

Milton beautifully says that truth is like a streaming fountain; "if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition." A man may be a heretic in the truth. How many Protestants, who rely upon their pastors, show as much "implicit faith as any lay papist of Loretto."

"A wealthy man, addicted to his pleasure and his profits, finds religion to be a traffic so entangled, and of so many piddling accounts, that of all mysteries he cannot skill to keep a stock going upon that trade. What should he do? Fain he would have the name to be religious, fain he would bear up with his neighbors in that. What does he, therefore, but resolves to give over toiling, and to find himself out some factor to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religious affairs; some divine of note and estimation that must be. To him he adheres, resigns the whole warehouse of his religion, with all the locks and keys, into his custody; and indeed makes the very person of that man his religion; esteems his associating with him a sufficient evidence and commendatory of his own piety. So that a man may say his religion is now no more within himself, but is become a dividual movable, and goes and comes near him according as that good man frequents the house. He entertains him, gives him gifts, feasts him, lodges him; his religion comes home at night, prays, is liberally supped, and sumptuously laid to sleep; rises, is saluted, and, after the malmsey or some well-spiced bruage, and better breakfasted than He whose morning appetite would have gladly fed on green figs between Bethany and Jerusalem, his religion walks abroad at eight, and leaves his kind entertainer in the shop trading all day without his religion."

This capital passage is one of the few in which Milton displays a sense of humor. The climax is especially shrewd.

Milton has another gird at the Presbyterian divines, and twits them with being blinded by the blaze of Calvin's beacon. "The light which we have gained," he says, "was

* *Essay on Milton, Essays, vol. i., p. 27.*

given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge." He protests against "the forced and outward union of cold and neutral and inwardly divided minds," and warns the new tyrants that it is necessary to reform even the reformation itself. After a noble apostrophe to London, then the vital centre of the new freedom, he argues that differences are a good sign of health and vigor, and utters the fine aphorism that "opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making." He is dull-witted who groans over "parties and partitions." "Fool!" exclaims Milton, "he sees not the firm root out of which we all grow, though into branches." England is not decaying, but casting off the old skin of corruption.

"Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam, purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms."

This magnificent passage is one of the ultimate glories of our literature. Surely the man who wrote it deserves a niche in the sanctuary of every English heart.

The rest of the *Areopagitica* is a direct and noble appeal to the Parliament to abolish the licensing system, to let books enjoy the same freedom as men, to give them liberty, and punish them only when they have sinned. "Liberty is the nurse of all great wits," says Milton. "Give me," he exclaims, "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties." Aye, and "though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worst in a free and open encounter?"

Unfortunately, Milton himself halted in sight of the goal; he hesitated to run the whole course, and fight the good fight to the end. At the very outset he seems to approve the Grecian laws for the suppression of "atheistical and blasphemous" books, and at the conclusion he will not hear of tolerating "popery and open superstition," still less what is "impious" and "against faith." He only pleaded for charity and peace among dissentient Protestants. Great as was his genius, noble as was his nature, he could not absolutely free himself from the prejudices of his age. He showed that the horizon of the very loftiest is bounded. Yet in pleading for such liberty as he thought desirable he was obliged to maintain principles that overshoot the mark he aimed at. The full meaning of a great idea cannot be perceived at once. Milton saw deeper than most of his contemporaries, though his vision was still limited; he felt more than they of the spirit of liberty, though it did not animate his whole nature. Sufficient unto the day was the service he performed. Other ages brought other tasks. The time came when other hands hurled the thunderbolts he forged at other barriers to freedom than those he assailed, when his own lightnings were darted to every point of the compass; for at last Liberty, like Wisdom, is justified of all her children.

G. W. FOOTE.

The British Method.

Mr. John Burns has been explaining to some friends, including a *Daily News* writer, the difference between the British and Continental ways of dealing with Socialism. This is what he is reported to have said:—

"If you are a Socialist on the Continent, you find people crying: 'Shoot him down.' In this country they say: 'You want to manage the world, do you? Well, here's a bit of it; try your hand at that.' If he succeeds, they give him a bigger bit, and so on till he is up to his ears in work, and has no time to think about revolutions. Oh, the British people are an artful lot."

"Artful" is John's fun. Really the British method is common sense. Let us have free speech all round, and danger ceases on every side. John Bull never did, and never will, fancy theories in politics. He is for moving a step at a time, with one foot always on the ground. Socialists who learn this are able to do a considerable amount of good. They keep on prodding John Bull, and make him take up one practical question after another.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

REPORT of Executive Meeting held August 11; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair.

Present:—Messrs. E. Bate, C. Cohen, F. Schaller, C. Watts, W. Heaford, E. W. Quay, C. Quinton, M. Loafer, P. Sabine, W. Leat, J. Neate, B. W. Munton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Cash statement read and adopted. The sub-committee's minutes were read and adopted.

Correspondence from Mr. G. J. Warren was read, asking the Executive to send a strong protest to all cemetery authorities against the prohibition of Sunday burials, and it was decided that, the present not being the most favorable time to agitate upon this point, the matter should be again adjourned.

The Excursion Committee reported that, in view of the lateness of the season and other circumstances, it would be inadvisable to arrange for an excursion this year, and it was then proposed that an outdoor excursion should be arranged for the children of members, to take the place of the usual Children's Party. After some discussion, Messrs. M. Loafer, W. Leat, P. Sabine, H. Brown, E. W. Quay, C. Cohen, F. Schaller, and Miss A. Brown were elected as a committee for this purpose, and instructed to arrange for a day's outing by brakes as early as possible in September. Donations towards the Children's Excursion should be sent to the Society's Treasurer, Mr. S. Hartmann, 29 Gubyon-avenue, Herne-hill, S.E., or to the Secretary at 377 Strand, W.C., who will be pleased to forward collecting-cards.

Mr. Cohen reported his attendance at the meetings of the Moral Instruction League.

The President then called the attention of the meeting to a circular issued by friends of Mr. Truelove, and personally moved that the sum of £5 should be voted towards the Fund being raised on behalf of Mr. Edward Truelove, in recognition of his long and constant service to the cause of Freethought. This was seconded by Mr. Charles Watts, and carried unanimously. The meeting then adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

ACID DROPS.

THE Dean of Manchester has been denouncing certain novels and plays (without naming them) which have a tendency to harden the moral sense. People read them, he said, on the ground that they must know what was going on in the world; but they might as well wish to see the Devil. And why not? we ask. The clergy talk a great deal about the Devil, and it would be interesting to interview him and get his opinion of them.

There are worse things in the Bible than in any modern novel or play. Why does not the Dean of Manchester look a little nearer home? Let him begin with his own "blessed book." To make it fit for children to read is a hopeless task, but it might be made fit for adults.

According to the *Washington Post*, a census of the whole world's population is to be taken in 1900. We don't quite see how it is to be done. But what a change since old Yahveh, the God of the Jews, slew seventy thousand of them because King David reckoned up the number of his subjects! If a slaughter like that occurred every time the census was taken, a lot of people would emigrate beforehand.

A rumor was spread at Avignon that the synagogue had to be pulled down, and that the Mayor was about to give the Jewish congregation the site of a chapel in order to build a synagogue. A priest wrote to the *Journal du Midi* a letter dealing with the proposed profanation, which fairly bubbled over with Christian charity. The Rev. Jules Bauer the Rabbi of the town, sent to the same paper a reply, in which, in denying the rumor, he said: "Let me express to you my painful surprise at the phraseology used by a priest in speaking of a religion to which he is indebted for his God, his Bible, and the principal articles of his faith."

Canon Barnott writes in the *Sunday Magazine* on "Women in the Light of the Cross." "What," he asks, "is the relation of Christ to this women's question?" But, instead of appealing to the alleged words of Christ in the Gospels for an answer, he repeats the old Christian Evidence statements about the historic influence of Christianity. "It is indisputable," he says, "that Christianity raised the status of women, and that the Christian clergy fought, firstly, against the power of the father to sell his daughter; and, secondly, against that of the husband to ill-treat his wife."

Now we rather like that "indisputable." It is a fine way of evading discussion. It also informs the reader, without

a positive lie on your part, that everybody agrees with you. But everybody does *not* agree with Canon Barnett on this point. Principal Donaldson, who is also a Christian minister, has publicly declared that he used to believe that Christianity had elevated the position of women in Europe, but that on looking into the evidence he found that Christianity had lowered it considerably. Canon Barnett should try to answer Principal Donaldson instead of re-asserting what is disputed, and calling it "indisputable."

Professor Mommsen is a great historian, but we regret to notice his Anglophobia. Being interviewed at Vienna by the *Neue Freie Presse*, he said: "I do not believe in the possibility of a union between England and America, and still less in a great alliance uniting the Anglo-Saxons and Germans. The English certainly need allies, because they are threatened by France and Russia; but what European Powers will do Britain's dirty work? My impression is rather that France, Russia, and Germany will combine to divide the British Empire among themselves. France would take Egypt, Germany Cape Colony, and Russia England's Asiatic possessions."

Now we hate war and love peace as much as anybody, but we venture to remind Professor Mommsen and his like that John Bull is not at all likely to take all that lying down. Before you divide the bear's skin you have got to kill the bear, and in this case the job is far from easy. There are millions of British hearts, in and outside the motherland, who would feel in her extremity what George Borrow felt as he stood upon the Rock of Gibraltar. He hoped for England a long and glorious future, but he added: "Or if thy doom be at hand, may that doom be a noble one, and worthy of her who has been styled the Old Queen of the waters! May thou sink, if thou dost sink, amidst blood and flame, with a mighty noise, causing more than one nation to participate in thy downfall!"

There would be blood and fire from one end of the earth to the other if ever old John Bull were forced with his back to the wall. Rivers and seas would be reddened. He might summon armed and drilled hosts from Asia and Africa to fight his European foes. And at the end of the struggle he might possibly stand, breathless and exhausted, but victorious. It would be a terrible business, anyhow, and the reactionary European powers had better think the matter over very carefully before they take the first step.

Besides, it isn't quite certain that Uncle Sam would like to see the British Empire divided up between Russia, France, and Germany. He might prefer to see the Union Jack flying instead of more Eagles. He has an Eagle of his own to fly, you know; and he might take it into his head that he would get along better and more comfortably with the Union Jack.

Uncle Sam is thought to be a practical man, and so he is; but, for a practical man, he has an astonishing lot of sentiment. And it is a lie that interest only rules the world. John Bull has acted like a true friend towards Uncle Sam lately, and Uncle Sam is not the man to forget it. He may have a long memory for wrongs, but he has a long memory for friendship too; and if ever the European Eagles gathered against old John to beat him down and divide him up, it is conceivable that Uncle Sam would let loose his Eagle too if it seemed at all necessary. There are millions of free men in America who know that England, with all her faults, is still a home of freedom in comparison with Russia and Germany, and even France, and their hands would itch if they saw her involved in a life-and-death struggle against awful odds.

But let us hope that Professor Mommsen's dream is *but* a dream, and that the peace of the world will not be so wantonly broken. It is a pity that patriotism should override humanity.

Mr. Walter Wren, who died recently, was a famous and successful "coach" for the Indian Civil Service and other public departments. According to Sir Walter Besant, the mother of one of his pupils once complained that her son did not go to church. "Madame," replied Wren, "my business is to fit your boy for the Indian Civil Service, not for the Kingdom of Heaven."

"The Devil came to me, and I put the purse in my pocket," said Ellen Gittings, an elderly lady, who was charged at the Marylebone Police-court with robbing Miss Mary Picton. It is all very well to make this sort of allegation against the Devil, but we suggest that his Satanic Majesty ought to be allowed to make a denial in court, like the gentlemen who contradict Mr. Hooley's assertions in the Court of Bankruptcy.

Professor Sayce, who is also a clergyman, does his best to minimise the heterodox results of Biblical criticism. Even

the *Daily News* is obliged to reprove him in reviewing his new work on the *Early History of the Hebrews*. His attacks, it says, on German professors are "ill-mannered and unfair," and he "differs from the men he attacks in being at once less candid and less thorough."

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners have set aside a portion of the money realised by the sale of Addington Park for the provision of a suitable residence for the Archbishop of Canterbury, within the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral. The new building is to be quite a palace. "Blessed be ye poor."

It is usually assumed that the clergy are educated men. For some years past *Lloyd's Newspaper* has had a weekly sermon from the pens of a large number of prominent sky-pilots. For poverty of ideas and general imbecility it would be difficult to match them even from the dustbins of departed ignorance. After reading these precious effusions one can understand Tennyson's terrible sarcasm when he said: "The general English view of God is as of an immeasurable clergyman."

Tolstoi's views on marriage do not seem to be spreading in the Church of England. Dr. Johnson, who has been twenty-two years Metropolitan of India, and is now turned seventy, is about to marry Miss Grace Murray, daughter of the Receiver of St. Paul's.

Christian missionaries compare badly with Mohammedan missionaries, at least in the opinion of the *Lagos Weekly Record*. Money and church building are the Christian missionary's leading object, and "his report is never complete unless it contains some reference to contributions." One soul-saver, who "intends building a large church," calls upon all the two thousand people in the district to pay a shilling a quarter until the work is finished. On the other hand, the Mohammedan missionary makes no fuss and asks for no gifts. He lives in an ordinary native thatch house, and his mosque is an open shed sprinkled with sand. Yet he catches ten times as many natives as his Christian rival.

Is this a Christian country? The Rev. Arthur Perowne wants to know. He is staggered by the fact that the great railway companies have come to an agreement not to issue cheap tickets to persons attending religious gatherings. But is it not just possible that the railway companies have a reason for this policy? Perhaps they suspect that the religious gentlemen who got hold of the cheap tickets would combine serving the Lord with doing a little business "on their own."

The Rev. Marmaduke Hare, rector of Bow, has disappeared. "Private money troubles" are said to be the cause. "It is a curious fact," the *Bethnal Green News* observes, "that Mr. Hare's predecessor left the parish under peculiar circumstances, while the extraordinary resignation of the Rev. J. H. Scott, late rector of Spitalfields, will be fresh in the public mind. East London is unfortunate with some of its rectors."

Holy Russia is a paradise for priests, but a hell for those who want to think for themselves. Just look at the following Article (196) from the Russian code:—"Any person legally convicted of propagating, or attempting to propagate, heresy among orthodox believers, or of establishing, or attempting to establish, a new creed or sect to the injury of the Orthodox Faith, shall be liable to the deprivation of all civil rights and to perpetual deportation. If the convicted sectarian reside in European Russia, he shall be deported to Transcaucasia; if he be living in any of the Caucasian or Transcaucasian Governments, he shall be transported to Siberia; and if he be resident in Siberia, he shall be banished to one of the most remote settlements of that country."

Deprivation of civil rights means that the offender has henceforth no redress for any wrong, and no legal protection against any enemy. He may be abused, robbed, or even murdered, with impunity.

Under this infamous Article prosecutions are being carried on by the Holy Synod against the unfortunate Stundists, a harmless body of Nonconformists who want to worship God in their own way. Seven of them were tried recently at Trubtschevsk, the case being heard with closed doors. The crime alleged against them was "proselytism." All were sentenced to the deprivation of civil rights and deportation to Transcaucasia. Their wives and children have asked for permission to accompany them, but this may not be granted. Thus the poor wretches are robbed of everything that makes life valuable, and all because they spoke to their neighbors about the merits of their own opinions!

How nice this reads from Manila! "The bulk of the priests, officials, and military monopolise the food supplies,

while a quarter of a million of the population are starving." Priests will have grub while there is any going.

"The idle monks," the *Daily News* says, "have eaten the heart out of the Philippines." Happily there is now a chance of these drones being expelled.

"Providence" has been very impish in Austria. After a spell of intense heat there came a fall of the thermometer, with snow and hailstorm, and the temperature at freezing point, in the month of August! Immense damage was done to vineyards, orchards, and corn crops.

Fearful hurricanes have raged in Poland. Houses had their roofs blown off, bridges were destroyed, and trees uprooted, much of the harvest was rendered worthless, and many persons were killed. "He doeth all things well."

The heat wave in the south of England has been very trying, and several men and women have succumbed to its influence. The Greenwich thermometer actually registered 142.9 degrees in the sun. It is a wonder that Prophet Baxter did not get out a new edition of his end-of-the-world prediction. We have been pretty near the temperature of the final conflagration.

Rev. Dr. Welldon's appointment to the Bishopric of Calcutta recalls the appointment of another famous headmaster. Dr. G. E. Cotton, of Rugby, was made Bishop of Calcutta in 1858. In October, 1866, he consecrated a cemetery at Kushtin. Returning to the steamer in the evening, he slipped on a platform of rough planks, and fell into the Ganges. He was carried away by the strong undercurrent and never seen again. When he consecrated the cemetery he was a supernatural personage; when he fell into the Ganges he was a common mortal.

Richard Davis, aged seventeen, a colored page boy, came over to London from Jamaica, and, being destitute, he knelt down and prayed on the pavement in Lavender-gardens, Clapham Junction. The Lord did not send him anything, but a policeman came along and took him into custody, and he was charged before the magistrate with wandering about without visible means of subsistence. The *invisible* means didn't count.

Rev. J. W. Nixon, vicar of Roberttown, has been preaching about the New Woman. He doesn't like her. She rides bicycles like a man, plays cricket like a man, and wants to preach like a man—which really shows her bad taste. Mr. Nixon scorns the idea of attracting congregations by "placing brazen-faced women in the pulpit," which should be reserved, we suppose, for brazen-faced men. The reverend gentleman reminds the fair sex that "The woman is of the man, and derives her authority from the man," and that "Her attitude should be one of trust, and dependence and humility, and modesty." Evidently he never had his mother-in-law in the house for a fortnight.

Archbishop Walsh has subscribed £25 to the Wolfe Tone Memorial. A correspondent of the *Times* gives some extracts from Tone's diary, showing that he was not fond of priests. "The Catholic clergy," he wrote on July 18, 1792, "have almost totally lost their influence since the people have got arms so fatal to superstition and priestcraft is even the smallest degree of liberty." On August 1 he writes: "Damn all bishops." On Sunday, August 19, he writes: "Go to mass; foolish enough; too much trumpery." Wolfe Tone clearly did not belong to the school of Archbishop Walsh.

"Dred" in *Daylight* (Norwich) flagellates the Yarmouth magistrates who are upholding Sabbatarianism at the expense of honest citizens who earn a part of their living on "the Lord's Day." Mr. De Caux and others seem to have made a gallant fight for freedom, but they have been overborne by the overwhelming number of bigots.

Murderers die piously in America, just as they do in England. Martin Thorn murdered William Guldensuppe. He and a woman enticed the victim to an unoccupied house, killed him, cut off his head, and threw the body into the East river, New York. For this exploit Thorn was electrocuted at Sing Sing prison. His last hours were spent in pious meditation and prayer. He wasn't fit for earth, but he felt quite fit for heaven.

Colonel Ingersoll was not allowed to deliver an oration in the Temple of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Chicago. The uncommonly good people swore it would be a profanation. It was no profanation, however, to have a debt of more than a million dollars on the building. The Union is unable to pay this sum, and the Temple will probably be lost. Ingersoll may lecture in it after all.

The American religious journals claim that the victories of the Yankee admirals are really due to prayer. This leads

Mr. W. H. Burr to send a pat story to the *Boston Investigator*. It is as follows: "Grant Thorburn, a Scotch Presbyterian, was notorious for traducing and libelling Thomas Paine, after whose death he had to make a humble retraction of a libel against Mme. Bonneville, Paine's legatee. Thorburn visited Scotland. On the return voyage a mutiny occurred. The captain called on the passengers for help to quell it. Thorburn was a very little man. He turned to a burly Scotchman, and said: 'You go below and help the captain while I go into the cabin and pray.' The mutiny was quelled, and on the arrival of the ship at New York it was announced that the honor of quelling it was due to Grant Thorburn."

Ballington Booth, who broke away from his father, the "General," and set up a rival body, the Volunteers of America, doesn't mean to lay himself open to the suspicion of having any sympathy with the original organisation, so he is going to discard uniform and give up drums. For his own sake, however, he should stick to the drums. Revivalism can't get on without a good noise, and the drum is its indispensable basis. Give up the drums, Ballington, and you'll have to apply to the old man for a job in the old concern. What is worse, you'll have to eat the fatted calf.

Professor Ludwig Vincenzi has made the "alarming" discovery that holy water is often a cause of infection. He has found a large quantity of bacteria in the holy water submitted to him for examination. The diphtheria bacillus was particularly vigorous. Many worshippers are in the habit of placing their fingers on their lips after immersion, and thus run the risk of being poisoned in the worst possible way. We suppose it would be too ghastly a sarcasm to have the holy water disinfected.

The ministers and messengers of the churches in the Particular Baptist Association, Monmouthshire, have published a Letter to the churches they represent. These gentlemen see that bagging the children is the surest way to success. "Bring before your children," they say, "as much Baptist literature as you can; enforce upon them what we profess to believe." That's the style. Force it on them. Ram it down their throats. Manufacture little Baptists. Catch them young, and make them believe before they can think. Of course it is rough on the children, but it makes life easier for the Baptist ministers.

Mr. Harrison Weir, in the *Standard*, gives a recipe for the cock-crowing nuisance. He proposes a kind of wire muzzle, large enough to let the bird feed and drink, but small enough to prevent him from opening his beak to crow. Peter would have given a trifle for such a muzzle when that old rooster opened fire upon him outside the Jerusalem police-court.

A FRENCH PRIEST RESIGNS.

MAURICE PERRIN, Catholic priest, and vicar of Bourg-de-Péage, Drôme, has sent his resignation to the Bishop of Valence, with the following letter, which we translate for the benefit of our readers:—

"For a long time I have ceased to believe the Catholic faith. I am absolutely convinced that most of the dogmas taught by the Church are mere human inventions, superstitions born of the ignorance of past centuries, and consequently unworthy of human reason and of an enlightened and unprejudiced intelligence. To teach what one does not believe, to present to the public ideas and doctrines which one rejects inwardly—what torture, sir, what anguish, for a man of any feeling who is obliged to undergo such a martyrdom! That torture and martyrdom were mine, and it is in order to endure them no longer that from this day I throw off my frock, that I return entirely to civil life, and that I begin to live in harmony with principles that are diametrically opposed to those of the Romish Church.

"Certainly my conscience had to speak loud and strong before I could summon courage to take this decisive step. The fear of throwing desolation into the heart of my good parents held me back for a long time. I also recognised that the public—at least a certain public, burning with sacerdotal zeal—would cover me with curses, maledictions, and all the anathemas of which it has such a rich abundance.

"All that I can say to this public is that, in acting as I have done, I have a perfectly clear conscience, which is in no wise disturbed by all those thunders which are now quite impotent.

"Consequently I have the honor to tell you, and to emphasize the statement, sir, that I tear myself freely and voluntarily away from the clerical and sacerdotal yoke, and that I consider myself entirely liberated from all the iniquitous and musty obligations which the Church once imposed on my youthful ignorance and inexperience."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, August 21, Finsbury Park; 28, Victoria Park and Athenæum Hall.

September 4, Athenæum Hall; 11, Athenæum Hall; 18, Birmingham; 25, Liverpool.

October 2, Glasgow.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—August 21, Finsbury Park; e., Secular Hall, Camberwell; 28, Victoria Park. September 4, Victoria Park.—All communications for Mr. Charles Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carninia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

J. G. BARTRAM.—We hope the Newcastle, South Shields, and Stanley friends will have a good time at Durham. We should like to be with them, but it cannot be.

R. P. EDWARDS, supported by a few friends, informs us that he intends to give a few Freethought lectures at Hampstead Heath. If the experiment succeeds, other lecturers will be invited. Freethinkers in the locality will please note.

JOHN ROSS.—Don't be discouraged. It is an "apathetic" time of the year.

ISAAC JACKSON (Delhi), applying for membership in the Secular Society, Limited, and sending his subscription for the first three years, writes: "I must congratulate you on the successful termination of your labors in connection with the inauguration of the new Society, and hope that you will be zealously supported by all true friends of the cause. There will, of course, be cavillers in every public movement, and there is no reason why ours should be an exception. You are fortunately above being affected by such trifles, but should you ever happen to feel that your equanimity is being disturbed, it will be comforting to remember that you have friends out here who have the utmost confidence in your leadership."

H. SEAL.—We would gladly have answered by letter, but we reply here as you request. Members of the Secular Society, Limited, will not have to attend any Board meetings. Only the Directors will have to do that. Members elect the Directors at the annual General Meeting, and also vote on all business submitted to that General Meeting, or to any special General Meeting that may be summoned. Members have no other duties or responsibilities under the Society's Articles; and their liability, in case the Society should ever be wound up, is limited to a maximum of £1, which cannot be exceeded under any circumstances whatever.

J. JONES (Monmouth).—Have we your name rightly? Is it "J." or "T." Pleased to know you are joining the incorporated Society, and glad to have your favorable opinion and good wishes.

G. CROOKSON.—It is a very old story, and appeared in our columns years ago. What do you mean by our "ignoring" whatever comes from Barnsley? We do nothing of the kind. It is quite a mistake to suppose that we entertain any ill-feeling.

F. BOORMAN.—Thanks for the Chatham list of subscriptions to the Wheeler Fund, which are acknowledged in detail in another column.

T. J. THURLOW, whose letter appears in another column, joins the Secular Society, Limited. The word "share" in his application induces us to repeat that the Society has no share capital. Its resources will be derived from members' subscriptions, donations, and legacies.

L. MARTIN.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

E. O. GREENING.—We should have been happy to insert the notice of the Co-operative Flower Show at the Crystal Palace if it had reached us earlier. It would be useless in this week's *Freethinker*, as you will see by the dates.

"FREETHINKER" CIRCULATION FUND.—E. Lawson, 10s.; D. R. Sweetland, 5s.; C. Shepherd, 1s.

H. PERCY WARD.—In our next.

H. R. KNIGHT.—Is your complaint quite reasonable? It is impossible to guarantee that all the addresses printed in the Secular Almanack will be accurate nearly twelve months afterwards. We have notified many changes of address in our Correspondence column.

F. RICHARDSON.—Lowes's *History of Philosophy* is an excellent book. We believe it is out of print. Good second-hand copies, in two volumes, fetch about £1.

C. E. SMITH.—Many thanks. Your enclosures are much appreciated.

W. P. BALL.—We are obliged for your weekly batch of useful cuttings.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Public Opinion—Ethical World—Open Court—New Century—Sydney Bulletin—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—People's Newspaper—Workers' Republic—Liberator—Invention—Daylight—Crescent—Independent Pulpit.

The National Secular Society's office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stone-cutter-street, E.C.

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.

OWING to the remarkably warm weather, it has been deemed advisable to postpone the re-opening of the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham-court-road, for Sunday evening lectures until August 28, when the platform will be occupied by Mr. Foote. London friends will please note.

It was not wet on Sunday, but a perfect blazer, and both the Freethought demonstrations came off in London as announced, Mr. Wilson kindly supplying a brake and horses on each occasion. The morning meeting was held on Clerkenwell-green. Mr. Forder acted as chairman, and the speakers were Messrs. H. Snell, A. B. Moss, Charles Watts, and G. W. Foote. Of course there was a very large crowd of listeners, and the speakers were much applauded. Miss Vance and other ladies took up a collection for the N. S. S. Some distance off the Secular gathering was another one of Christians. Imitation is the sincerest flattery, and the Christian Evidence people were there with a brake, surmounted by a big red banner, perhaps by way of suggesting the Blood of Christ. Half the Christian Evidence lecturers in London were collected upon it, including one old gentleman who screamed like a passionate lunatic, his shrill accents pervading the whole neighborhood. On the whole it was a lively morning on Clerkenwell-green. A report appeared in *Monday's Chronicle*.

Judging by a suggestive line in the *Chronicle's* report, and by occasional words that reached our own ears, the policy of the Christian speakers was one of reckless lies and slander. Christian Evidence work generally finds a man a blackguard or leaves him so. To answer such fellows is to pay them too much honor. They have no idea of reasoning; their whole stock-in-trade consists of personalities; and to reply to them is to descend to their level.

The afternoon Freethought demonstration was held in Regent's Park, and the Secular platform (Mr. Wilson's brake) was surrounded by an immense crowd. After a while the Christian Evidence lot arrived in their brake, which they drove as close as possible to the Secular platform. Their object was not so much to hold a meeting of their own as to spoil the meeting of their opponents. And then they talk like the hypocrites they are about "love your enemies," and all the rest of the verbiage of the Sermon on the Mount.

Fortunately a Park constable happened to be on the spot. He saw through the Christian little game, and he spoiled it by ordering the "Evidence" van to shift. He moved the "charity" lot a hundred yards away, where they were free to lie and libel, but not to disturb the peace.

Mr. A. B. Moss acted as chairman at the Freethought Demonstration, opening the proceedings with a brief, forcible speech. Mr. Heaford followed in his best vein. One interrupter gave him a good opportunity, which he made the most of. "I was once a Christian myself," Mr. Heaford said. "When?" growled a known Christian Evidence man. "When was I a Christian?" said Mr. Heaford; "why, when I was young and foolish." At which quick repartee there was loud and long laughter all round. Mr. Cohen came next. He also was in his best vein, and the crowd grew during his happy and effective speech. Then came Mr. Watts with a twenty minutes' oration that was very warmly applauded. Mr. Foote wound up with a speech of about the same length. The crowd which was big when he commenced grew larger and larger as he proceeded, and the sea of upturned faces was a fine sight from the platform. The meeting lasted an hour and a half, and the Secular brake drove away amidst cheers and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs.

These demonstrations will do a lot of good, and we must have more of them next summer. One will take place this afternoon (August 21) in Finsbury Park. The position will be just above the bandstand, and the speaking will begin at 3.30. The speakers will be Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Cohen.

This evening, Sunday, August 21, Mr. Charles Watts reopens the Secular Hall, New Church-road, Camberwell, when he will lecture upon "Religion: Is it a Blessing or a Curse?" Mr. Watts gives his services upon this occasion, the proceeds going to the funds of the local Branch.

A meeting has been held at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, in aid of American soldiers' and sailors' families. Lieutenant Hobson, who sank the *Merrimac* in Santiago harbor, was announced to take the chair, and Colonel Ingersoll to deliver an oration. Bishop Potter and Archbishop Corrigan were among the other speakers on the program. We wonder what they thought of "Pagan Bob's"

oratory, and how they relished the applause he was sure to receive.

Freethinkers in Bristol and Reading, who are willing to assist in the work of Secular reorganisation in those places, are requested to communicate with the N. S. S. secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 376-7 Strand, London, W.C.

The New York *Truthseeker* will be twenty-five years old next month. We hope it will live another twenty-five anyhow, and that Eugene Macdonald (we don't forget George either) will edit it all the time.

We see by the *Truthseeker* that the widow of its founder, Mr. D. M. Bennett, died on July 31, in the seventy-sixth year of her age. She stood nobly by her husband during his trial and imprisonment. Her last days were spent in Eugene Macdonald's house. "She and I," wrote Mr. Bennett from behind his prison bars, "have lived by ourselves. We have no children, and no other members of our family. She misses me sadly, and mourns over my wrongs. I have been her support, her sunlight, her all, and she has been mine." Another illustration of the horrible character of "infidel homes."

The *Liberator* (Melbourne) reprints Mr. Gould's article on "A Finger Nail Legend" from our columns. Mr. Symes pitches into Ben Tillett for his laudation of Jesus Christ. He says that he invited Tillett to meet him in public debate, but Tillett declined on the ground that he was not a debater. Probably he meant that Joseph Symes was too many for him.

The *People's Newspaper*, Rockhampton, Queensland, reproduces the conclusion of Mr. Foote's essay on "The Doom of Christian Spain." Mr. Wallace Nelson is connected with the *P. N.*, which is a bright journal, conducted on moderate Socialist lines.

The Free Press Defence Committee held a meeting on Monday evening in the French Salon of the St. James's Hall, and a resolution *re* the Bedborough prosecution was carried unanimously. Mr. Peddie occupied the chair in the absence of Mr. Frank Harris, of the *Saturday Review*, who was unfortunately down with influenza and bronchitis. Mr. William Platt, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Foote, and others, spoke to the resolution. It was generally agreed that the ordinary press gave inadequate attention to this attack upon the right of free publication. Perhaps an alteration for the better will take place before Mr. Bedborough's trial in September.

The National Secular Society's Executive has decided to have a brake excursion on a Saturday early in September for the children, and a sub-committee has been appointed to look after the details. Of course the children will go free, and provision will be made for their solid and fluid wants. This will involve an expenditure of about £20 for say 200 children, and subscriptions towards it are earnestly invited. It would be easy enough to include 300 children if the necessary funds were forthcoming. Those who intend to give should forward their contributions as quickly as possible, either to Miss Vance, N. S. S. office, 376-7 Strand, London, W.C., or to the editor of the *Freethinker*.

The Newcastle Branch joins the Shields and Stanley Branches to-day (August 21) in an excursion to Durham. The Newcastle brakes start from the Monument at 9 a.m. The tickets are 2s. 6d. each.

Secular Thought (Toronto) reproduces Mr. Foote's article on "The Doom of Christian Spain." Editor Ellis seems to be considering the advisability of turning his paper into a monthly, though he will "maintain the weekly issue while it is possible." We hope it *will* be possible; we know it *should* be possible.

The French Federation of Freethinkers organised the usual August demonstration at the statue of Etienne Dolet on the Place Maubert, near the spot where that great scholar and humanist was burnt alive by the Holy Catholic Church. The Prefect of Police, M. Blanc, made elaborate arrangements for the preservation of "order." The demonstrators had to visit the statue group by group, and all speeches were prohibited. Some persons cried out "Vive Rochefort!" and others replied, "Vive Zola!" Whereupon the guardians of the peace fell upon the demonstrators and arrested about thirty of them. Subsequently the various groups assembled in a large hall, where several speeches were delivered.

One of the emblems carried by the demonstrators was this—"To combat an error is to affirm a truth. To Etienne Dolet, burnt by the priests!" Several satirical emblems were seized by the police. Paris has retrograded in the matter of liberty since 1889, but we are glad to see that the Freethinkers do not mean to be suppressed by the Church-and-Army reactionists.

LAST MOMENTS.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

NOTHING could well be more absurd than to judge a man's life by his manner of leaving it. So much depends upon the nature of the causes which occasion death. When nature is exhausted, the body and mind enfeebled by disease, perhaps racked by physical suffering and distracted by anxiety as to loved ones left behind, it is scarcely the time to judge of the character or conduct of a life. Such a method is as unsafe as it is unfair. Yet there are ministers of religion and others who delight in drawing contrasts between the peaceful death-beds of believers and the agonies of sceptics. The goody-goody press teems with the edifying death-bed triumphs of eminent Christians, from Joseph Addison, who (perhaps after a bracing draught of his favorite brandy) sent for his nephew, Earl Warwick, to see how a Christian could die, to the much-belauded Prince Consort, who left her Majesty to the tender care of late Mr. Brown after singing "The Rock of Ages." Yet the biggest scoundrels have died as calmly as the most pious Christians. Monsieur Louis Dominique Cartouche, who, as the pious stories go, began life by stealing a pin and became a prince of robbers, endured the torture with the utmost firmness. In the good old days, when executions were as plentiful as blackberries, it was as common for highwaymen to "die game" as it is now for negro murderers to be "jerked to Jesus" after devoutly singing a hymn. Pious Dr. Johnson, with all his bigotry, was one of the best-hearted men that ever breathed, yet his dread of death was extreme. Indeed, it might almost be said that the more savage men are the less sensitive are they to death, as well as to physical pain. The firmness with which an American Indian will endure torture is almost incredible. Some instances there are of civilised natures able to rise superior to the most excruciating pains. Balthasar Gerard, the assassin of William of Orange, bore the most horrible tortures not only with bravery, but bravado. Giles Dorey, accused by the Salem Puritans of witchcraft, allowed himself to be slowly crushed to death without uttering one cry. So far from Infidel death-beds being especially horrible, the collection of instances published by Mr. Foote affords proof that the end of eminent Freethinkers has usually been as philosophic as their lives.

Of these some are intensely absorbing, as of the martyrs Bruno, Vanini, and poor Thomas Woolston. The execution of Danton, the death-bed of Mirabeau, the tragic ends of Condorcet and Shelley, are of so thrilling a description that, once read, they are never forgotten. Others, as with Goethe, Byron, Spinoza, Buckle, Clifford, Hobbes, Owen, Mill, etc., take their interest from the men and their work. In some cases an interest attaches from an attempt made at their conversion, as with Diderot and Hugo, or from misrepresentation made by the orthodox, as with Littré, Paine, Voltaire, and Gambetta. Some, like Harriet Martineau, R. Cooper, H. Hotherington, and Austin Holyoake, have secured themselves from this by making a profession of faith when approaching their last moments.

The terrors of death have been much enhanced by the superstitions surrounding it, and by the practice of giving over the dying man to the hands of a ghostly confessor and comforter—a practice which Jean Paul Richter compares to the evacuations demanded from a child ere he is allowed to go to sleep. "Are you not afraid to meet your God?" was once demanded of a desperate sinner *in extremis*. The sinner did not exactly say, with Omar Khayyam, "He's a good fellow, and 'twill all be well," but he had heard of easy methods of propitiation, and replied: "No, I am not afraid of God; it's the other fellow I'm afraid of." This anecdote may be apocryphal, but the following one has the authority of Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire Universel*. When dying, the Abbé Terrasson saw his confessor enter his room, and said: "Here is my housekeeper, Madame Luquet. I forget things; confess her. *C'est absolument la même chose.*" The confessor, seeing himself mocked, insisted on the abbé answering for himself. "*Avez-vous été luxurieux?*" asked he. "Madame Luquet, *ai-je été luxurieux?*" said the dying man. "*Un peu,*" replied she. "*Un peu,*" repeated the abbé; and the confessor abruptly departed, leaving the abbé to die, as he had lived, impenitent.

Boureau Deslandes, in his *Réflexions sur les grands Hommes qui sont mort en Plaisantant*, relates many curious stories, and, among others, one from Brantome, of Mlle. Limeuil,

maid of honor to Catherine de Medicis. When the moment of her death drew nigh she called for her manservant, named Julien, who played excellently upon the violin. "Julien," she said, "take your violin and play constantly, till you see I am dead, 'The Defeat of the Swiss.'" This he did, she accompanying him till she came to the words "All is lost," which, after repeating twice, she turned to those about, "All is lost at this push in good earnest," and so expired.

When Malherbe lay dying, his confessor represented to him the felicities of a future state in the customary low and trite commonplaces. "Hold your tongue," the dying critic interrupted; "your wretched style only makes me out of conceit with them." Scarron told his friends, when weeping around him: "Ah, my good comrades, you will never cry half so much for me as I have made you laugh."

A very good story is told of a Freethinker who had been jockeyed out of some property which he expected from a wealthy relative, and which at the last moment had been secured by two priests for the Church. Upon his own death-bed he sent for the same rapacious pair. As soon as they arrived, expectant of further favors from the family, he bade them sit down, one on either side of the bed, and took no further notice of them. Upon their pestering him as to what he had to communicate, he answered: "Nothing; I simply sent for you that I might die like Jesus—between two thieves."

An incorrigible punster, who was told that in heaven he might wear a diadem, replied he did not want to *die a dem* bit. This deplorably bad pun so disgusted the parson and the doctor that they left, and the sick man recovered. Another dreadful example was the Freethinker who at his death-bed absolutely prohibited the approach of any of his sceptical friends, but who said they might send as many sky-pilots as they could find. His malady was contagious.

Some deaths among the ancients are remembered as being peculiarly appropriate. Thus Anacreon choked himself with a grape-stone. Petronius opened his veins and bled himself to death, amusing himself until nature was exhausted by listening to love verses, jocular stories, and laughable epigrams. T. Pomponius Atticus, in his seventy-seventh year, when he found himself attacked by an incurable illness, called his friends around and asked them if they could show any reason why he should not die, as he chose to do, by voluntary starvation. Lucretius was alleged to have died by his own hand, but the story is not without suspicion of having been concocted by some enemy of the Epicureans, as it first appears in the Eusebian chronicle. Epicurus himself is stated to have been afflicted with severe sufferings, aggravated by stone in the bladder. Yet from Diogenes Laertius we learn that he bore his sufferings with a truly philosophical patience, cheerfulness, and courage, and passed away in peace.

King Darius is said to have commanded, as he was expiring, that the following words should be inscribed on his tomb: "I could drink much wine and be sober." Probably that was a famous qualification in his day. Far different is the epitaph ascribed to Cyrus. "O, man! whatsoever thou art, and whencesoever thou comest, thou wilt come to the same condition in which I now am. I am Cyrus, who brought the empire to the Persians; do not envy me, I beseech thee, this little piece of ground which covereth my body." Similarly the Emperor Septimus Severus placed this inscription on his urn: "Thou soon wilt be the habitation of a man the world was too narrow for."

Sydney Smith says: "It seems necessary that great people should die with some sonorous and quotable saying." Mr. Pitt said something not intelligible in his last moments. G. Rose made it out to be: "Save my country, heaven!" The nurse, on being interrogated, said that he asked for barley water. Mr. Foote, in his *Infidel Death-Beds*, has, of course, alluded to Goethe's cry for "More light!" upon which so much has been written. The meaning, of course, was purely physical. Still more absurd is the exclamation of Kant's biographer upon Kant's last phrase, "It is enough." "Mighty and symbolic words!" They probably alluded to the attentions he was receiving.

If the last words of eminent men are often invested with a significance they do not possess, there are no doubt instances of striking expressions having been used at the lightning before death. "Draw the curtain, the farce is played," is credibly ascribed to Rabelais, whose confessor declared that he died drunk. Ignatius Loyola died with

the word of his society, "Jesus," on his lips. Edmund Kean's last words on the stage were: "Othello's occupation's gone—I am dying, speak to them for me." Judge Talford died on the bench while remarking that the chief thing required in English society was sympathy 'tween class and class. Muhammed died declaring: "I come among my fellow laborers on high." Scott's oft-recited last words of Marmion were taken from an actual incident in Scottish history. The words of Latimer at the stake, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man: we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as shall never be put out," are a part of English history, and will be remembered as long as the Church of Rome endures.

There are many instances, also, of the ruling passion strong in death, from the gaming pedestrian who offered, when an angel, to fly the parson for fifty pounds a side, to Napoleon Buonaparte, whose last words were "*tête d'armée*." Bentham died like a true Utilitarian. He said to a favorite disciple: "I now feel that I am dying; our care must be taken to minimise the pain. Do not let any one of the servants come into the room, and keep away the youths; it will be distressing to them, and they can be of no service. Yet I must not be alone; you will remain with me, and you only, and then we shall have reduced the pain to the lowest possible amount." When the end came, he died imperceptibly without struggle or suffering. Life faded into death as twilight blended day with night.

"Give Dayrolles a chair" were the last words of Lord Chesterfield. Even more urbane was the merry monarch, Charles II., who thought not of his many sins, but apologised to his attendants for the trouble he was causing. He confessed he had been a most unconscionable time in dying, and hoped they would excuse him.

Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, made observations on his pulse almost until it ceased to beat. Bayle, the sceptic, died in harness. So much did he despise life that he would not be persuaded to take anything that might assuage the heat of a slow fever that long had preyed on him. He spent the great part of the night that he died correcting what he had written against Le Clerc, and, just as he had finished his correction, he expired. Petrarch was found dead in his study with his head reclining on a book, as was his wont when studying. William Blake, in the hour of death, lay chanting songs, the music and the verse rippling impromptu from him. He regretted he could not commit those inspirations, as he called them, to paper. "Kate," he said to the faithful wife who consecrated her life to aiding his genius, "I am a changing man—I always rose and wrote down my thoughts, whether it rained, snowed, or shone, and you arose, too, and sat beside me—this can be no longer." Cunningham, in his *Lives of the Painters*, says that his wife, who sat watching him, did not perceive when he ceased breathing.

Haydn, just before death, played his famous "Hymn to the Emperor." Most striking of all were the last moments of Mozart. Calling his friends around him, with them he sung his grand "Requiem." "Did I not tell you it would be my dirge," said the dying musician, and so passed away in melody.

The Chevalier Bayard, when mortally wounded, ordered that he should be laid down with his face to the enemy, saying: "Having never yet turned back to a foe, I will not begin on the last day of my life." When Sir Charles James Napier lay dying, Mr. McMurdo, his son-in-law, seized the shattered, shot-torn fragments of the colors of the 22nd, and waved them over the expiring warrior. A grim smile of satisfaction crossed his face, and so he passed away.

Dying in public has no doubt tended to bring out self-consciousness. John Barnveld, the Dutch statesman, falsely accused of a design to betray Holland to the King of Spain, spoke with dignity before his execution: "I am no traitor. I have administered with justice, and as a good patriot I die." Sir Thomas More was serene until the last. Seeing the scaffold totter, he is reported to have said: "I pray you, Mr. Lieutenant, see me safe up. As for my coming down, I will shift for myself." Stephen Dolet, burnt as an Atheist in 1546, is said to have been heedless of the confessor, and to have joked until the last. To him is attributed the pun, "*Non Dolet ipse Dolet, sed pia turba dolet* (Dolet does not grieve, but the pious crowd grieves)." Lucilio Vanini, also burnt as an Atheist (1619), reminded his executioners that their savior died in despair, while he

died undaunted. Had Boureau-Deslandes, who relates these and other stories, lived until after the French Revolution, he might have added many other instances. The Girondists went to the guillotine singing—

“Contre nous de la tyrannie,
Le couteau sanglant est levé.”

André Chenier is said to have recited the first scene of Racine's *Andromaque* on the road to the guillotine with his friend Roucher. “You tremble,” said someone to the aged Bailley as he ascended the fatal steps (Nov. 11, 1793). “’Tis with the cold,” he replied. The apostrophe of Madame Roland to the statue of Liberty, erected for a *fête* near the scene of execution, is known by all.

A NEW RELIGION.

AFTER supper three of us—the squatter, his wife, and I—took seats on the doorstep and lighted our corn-cob pipes. Pretty soon the wife observed: “Stranger, Jed and me hev been sorter talkin’ it over sence you happened along, and Jed says him will abide by what you say.”

“Well, what is it?”

“Hev you got any partickler religion?”

“Well, no.”

“But the Methodist is purty good, ain’t it?”

“I think it is.”

“And the Baptist ain’t got no pizen in it?”

“No, indeed.”

“And them Presbyterians and United Brethren, they do manage to get into heaven, don’t yo’ reckon?”

“Yes, I reckon they do.”

“And them Universalists stand a fair show, don’t they?”

“I always thought so.”

“Wall, now, to come to the pint. My Jed is sort of sliding along to’rds the Mormon religun, while I can’t abear it. He’un says it’s right, but I say it’s wrong. What’s yo’ opinyon ’bout it?”

“Does the kind you mean permit a man to have more than one wife?” I asked of Jed.

“She do,” he answered. “I’m sorter reckonin’ on ’bout five on ’em if I go. In course the ole woman will be fust, though she’s got to prance around when I talk.”

“Did you ever hear of the O.K. religion?” I asked of the wife.

“Never did, sah. Whar is it at?”

“It’s coming down through this part of the country in a few weeks. It permits every woman to have six husbands, and in case she’s married she needn’t keep her old husband at all.”

The woman sprang up and ran down to the road and began to look up and down. Jed smoked away in a vigorous manner for a minute, and then called out to her: “What yo’ lookin’ fur, Sary?”

“For that O.K. religun. I want ’em to put me down fur heaps o’ the religun, and from five to eight husbands.”

“Yo’ cum back yere. What ar’ yo’ astrivin’ fur? Hain’t I concluded to calkerlate that I doan’ want any o’ that Mormon religion?”

“Jed, are the Baptist religion good nuff?”

“Reckon she are.”

“The Baptist religion and one wife?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’ll sot down and finish my pipe, and I consider to believe that we won’t hev no trouble in this yere family.”

Next morning, when I rode away, Jed walked beside my horse for half a mile, and at parting he said: “Stranger, if yo’ should happen to meet with the chap who is interducin’ that O.K. religun in these parts, jest tell him whar I live, and that we doan’t want a blamed bit of it around our squat.”

WHEELER MEMORIAL FUND.

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“No, I can’t subscribe,” said the millionaire; “I don’t believe in sending out foreign missionaries.” “But the Scriptures command us to feed the hungry.” The man of wealth shrugged his shoulders. “Well, I’d feed them on something cheaper than missionaries,” he rejoined, with the brusquerie that characterises his class.

ATHEISM IN KID GLOVES.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY conferred a very doubtful benefit on literature when he coined the words “Agnostic” and “Agnosticism.” When the word is used the mind inevitably reverts to two historic associations. We know that there was a set of religious thinkers called “Gnostics,” who gave a good deal of ecclesiastical trouble; but Huxley clearly did not mean to suggest any contradiction or opposition to such a sect. We also remember that when Paul came to Athens he found an altar with this inscription: “To an Unknown God.” Can this, then, be the origin of the phrase? If so, Agnosticism would apparently be a form of religion; for Paul, on this very ground, calls the Athenians very superstitious—a charge which any modern Agnostic would be very apt to resent. To worship an unknown god is one thing; to be doubtful whether there is a god is another. Yet it is the latter phase of mind which is undoubtedly designated by the term in question.

Ask “the man in the street” what an Agnostic means, and in nine cases out of ten he will answer—an Atheist. Religious newspapers give the same reply. Agnostic, Atheist, Unbeliever, Sceptic, Secularist—such terms are used indiscriminately. Small wonder that G. L. Mackenzie, the “Laureate of Secularism,” summed up the whole matter in the following lines:—

A boundless sea beyond thee there doth lie;
Give o’er, O man! withdraw thy weary eye;
No mortal mind can reach the mystic why:
Our seas, in seeming only, meet the sky.
Set, then, thy sail to reach the homely shore;
Truth there alone, and all thou canst explore
Invite thine earnest search—an endless store;
Content thyself with this, not wander more.

MIMNERMUS.

BOOK CHAT.

THE popular novelists are getting bolder. Taking their cue from the great realistic masters like Zola, Ibsen, Kielland, and Maupassant, they endeavor to find subjects for themselves. Adultery is getting commonplace in novels now. One lady novelist, who writes under the name of “Martin J. Pritchard,” will find readers enough for her book, *Without Sin* (published by Heinemann). The author has attempted to translate the central idea of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception into a modern story, and she has done it very well. The book has already run through several editions, and if Detective Sweeney cares to turn his attention from scientific works he may yet advertise this book sufficiently to make the author one of the best known of contemporary novelists.

* * *

When the story opens, the heroine, a little Jewish girl of ten, thinks the Virgin “the goodest woman that ever lived.” She is in love with a picture of the Virgin, which bore a resemblance to the girl herself. Thoroughbred Semite as she was, born of a long line of Polish hucksters, she absorbed a strange jumble of the world’s legends from one Martin Baird, who, perhaps, had a vague idea of some day converting the little Jewess to Christianity. Her love for the Virgin never falters, and some years after she sits to a young artist, Elliot Mayne, for a picture of the Virgin, and the lilies she held in her hand cause her to faint. The artist, a dissolute, unprincipled man, takes advantage of her helplessness, and seduces her without her knowledge. The continuous brooding on religious matters has unhinged her brain, and she considers that the miracle of the Immaculate Conception has been repeated in her special case. This is the keynote of the story, which is very powerfully worked out to its very striking conclusion. We have no space to summarise the remainder of the plot, but *Without Sin* is a novel of special interest to Freethinkers, being the first work of fiction in English in which a fundamental dogma of Christism is introduced, without fear and without favor, as fit material for a novelist.

* * *

Zola’s action in the Dreyfus case has at last been used as the subject of a melodrama, *Zola: the Truth Seeker*, which was produced at the Standard Theatre, Shoreditch. The performance took place in Yiddish, and formed a sequel to the same author’s drama, *Captain Dreyfus*.

* * *

Messrs. Methuen’s fine edition of Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, edited by Professor Bury, of Dublin, has now reached its sixth volume. There are to be seven volumes altogether, so that this compact and excellently edited edition of Gibbon’s immortal work will soon be complete.

* * *

Mr. Elliot Stock will shortly issue a rhythmic version of the Book of Job by Otis Cary, a Japanese scholar, under the ironical title, *The Man Who Feared God for Naught*.

Birthday books threaten to become a little absurd. Mr. Arrowsmith has just issued *The Chamberlain Birthday Book*. Joseph is an interesting figure in the political world, but he has not a scintilla of literary genius, and scrappy extracts from speeches, mostly made in his old Radical days, are not appetising. Take the following beautiful quotation: "I am an English Nonconformist born and bred in dissent, and I am opposed, from honest conviction, to anything in the nature of State interference with or State aid to religion." It only needs the addition of the words "Loud cheers" to make it perfect.

CORRESPONDENCE.

CHRISTIAN CIVILISATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Puritanical laymen and clergymen, in their fanatical crusade against Turkey, never cease to compare the alleged insecurity of life in the dominions of the Sultan with the immunity from violence which they pretend can be enjoyed in England through the influence of Christianity. But it appears from recently-published reports that there is such a reign of terror now in certain parts of London that respectable citizens are at the mercy of a cruel horde of British savages, against whom they are afraid to appear in the police-courts. In no part of the Ottoman Empire could such a state of lawlessness be found, for one might traverse it from one extremity to the other with more safety than in going through Lambeth and the adjacent districts.

The Church with its immense revenues, and the Nonconformists with their superior virtue, having failed to remove the miscreants, thieves, and murderous ruffians with which this metropolis is infested, what are we to think of the School Board, which was to have reclaimed and humanised the children of the criminal classes? It also has proved false, for it has neglected those for whose redemption it was instituted, in order to cram the heads of boys and girls whose parents are, in innumerable cases, well-to-do and able to educate their own offspring.

To what are we to attribute the inherent brutality of so large a proportion of the population of this country? Is it due to the reading of the Bible, in which the horrible atrocities of the Jews are held up to admiration and the Eternal is represented as a monster whose wrath can be appeased only by blood? Or may it be traced to the blood of Baltic pirates and Norman robbers, whose sanguinary disposition has been inherited by their descendants?

The profession of Christianity in the United Kingdom is merely a cloak to hide the selfishness and rapacity of a greedy and hypocritical class. The "Hooligans" and "larrikins" of South London are in nature no worse than the "gallant warriors" who are on their way now to murder the brave defenders of Khartoum. If the money wasted on such criminal expeditions for the benefit of capitalists had been expended in removing the gutter-snipes and street arabs of the large cities away from their evil surroundings to become colonists in new lands, London might not have degenerated to a level with Sodom and Gomorrhah.

I. STOYLESKI SANDERS.

ARE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS MISTRANSLATED?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The Edinburgh School Board is said to have decided to introduce a new arrangement of the Decalogue into the schools in that city. A committee is probably still hunting around for a satisfactory formula. The idea is not so hopeless of accomplishment as some may think, for it appears to me that the Ten Commandments have been very erroneously translated. I am aware that it is a very bold thing to say that the principal part of the Old Testament, on which, according to all theologians, the duties and the knowledge of the duties of all mankind have for ever depended, has never yet been understood. It is a very important matter indeed, and I ask all who are capable of undertaking the investigation to examine the Hebrew text, and see if what I say is right, or even possibly right. I submit that the first three Commandments should be rendered somewhat this way:—

- I. Thou shalt not honor the other gods more than me.
- II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any gods that are in heaven above or, etc.
- III. Thou shalt not use the name of Javeh thy God for an idol.

In the common rendering the words "before me" make absolute nonsense, as they can only suggest that what is not to be permitted before his face might be lawful behind his back. The Prayer Book version has "but me." This, though supported by the Septuagint, is a dishonest rendering, and is plainly an attempt to make sense of what appeared to be none. The accepted rendering is "before me" (*anti faciem meam*, or, *in conspectu meo*), which, as an old commentator explains, signifies that it is a great sin, *ut si uxor inspectanti*

marito rem haberet cum alio viro. You see anything can be explained if you have imagination enough. Besides, it is unfair to leave out the first part, or preface, of the commandment, because it might suggest incongruous ideas. God Almighty might be trusted to state his own commands in his own way.

In the second Commandment the word "thing" is evidently a wrong supplement. Nobody, I daresay, ever made the image of a *thing* in order to worship that thing. It was the mode of worshipping foreign *deities*, in the existence of which the Israelites as firmly believed as in the existence of Jahveh, that was impermissible. The Israelites were forbidden to revile any of the gods (Exodus xxii. 28), and in one case they were permitted to render a certain homage to one of them called Azazel (see Leviticus xvi.).

The third commandment is commonly supposed to forbid swearing. The Jews could not have understood it in this way. They had a multiplicity of oaths, some of which were sacred and others profane, but none were forbidden. "By his name thou shalt swear" was the law and the prophets. The happy time predicted by Isaiah is when "Every tongue shall swear," and the Psalmist asks God to remember how he swore as a reason for granting him a kindness.

W. B.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Doing my mite towards making your effort to establish on a legal basis a permanent association for the carrying on of our distinctive Secular propaganda a success, by becoming a shareholder myself, and asking my brother and sister Freethinkers who have not yet done so to do the same, I am actuated by a two-fold motive. In the first place, I am full of hope that it may be the means of uniting into one compact and effective whole the hitherto only partially organised forces of Freethought, so as to greatly enhance its power as a demolisher of our national superstition. Secondly, I am fully persuaded that, in the event of any reasonable measure of success attending its inauguration, so as to show the religious world the futility of supposed obstacles in the way of Freethought endowment by bequest, the first sure step will have been taken for the final removal of all such obstacles.

We have a remarkable illustration of the truthfulness of this assumption in the case of Mr. Bradlaugh's great work in demolishing the oath obstacle that barred his way into Parliament for so many weary years; for, the moment it became clear that the obstacle in question could not keep a Bradlaugh out, the opposition to its removal virtually succumbed. So will it be with the laws of bequest. Let the Secular Society but prove them to be useless in the matter of the prevention of the endowment of Freethought, and our Christian friends will be just as ready to help in their repeal as they now are to benefit by them. In fine, to my mind, the latter of these considerations constitutes in itself an all-sufficient reason why all genuine Secularists should forget all minor differences and unite in making one grand effort to succeed in this, which I fervently hope will prove itself to be a most useful and enduring enterprise.

T. J. THURLOW.

SOME SAMPLES OF CHRISTIAN TOLERATION.

THE late-lamented Mr. Gladstone once declared, in an unguarded moment, at the Mansion House, that Christianity carried the blessings of tolerance wherever it went. A glance at the following list (very incomplete) of sentences on Freethinkers during this present century will show the falsity of the Grand Old Man's opinion:—

- D. I. Eaton, two years' imprisonment.
- R. Carlile, nine and a-half years' imprisonment.
- Jane Carlile, two years' imprisonment.
- Mary Anne Carlile, two years' imprisonment.
- Robert Taylor, three years' imprisonment.
- John Cleve, four months' imprisonment and fine of £50.
- H. Hetherington, four months' imprisonment.
- Chas. Southwell, one year's imprisonment and fine of £100.
- G. J. Holyoake, six months' imprisonment.
- Adams, one month's imprisonment.
- Paterson, eighteen months' imprisonment.
- Robinson, one year's imprisonment.
- Finlay, two months' imprisonment.
- Matilda Roalfe, two months' imprisonment.
- Robert Pooley, twenty-one months' imprisonment (five months served).
- G. W. Foote, one year's imprisonment.
- W. J. Ramsey, nine months' imprisonment.
- H. A. Kemp, three months' imprisonment.

It is worth while recalling that Charles Bradlaugh had to win the seat which Northampton gave him in the face of the most bigoted and terrible opposition. Mrs. Besant was deprived of her child by an order of the Court of Chancery, and the Marquis of Queensberry had his seat in the House of Lords taken from him.

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.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, Entertainment.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 6.30, C. Watts, "Religion: Is it a Blessing or a Curse?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 3.15, E. Pack; 6.30, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "How to Read the Bible." Peckham Rye: 3.15, R. P. Edwards, "Triumph of Rationalism."

EAST LONDON BRANCH: Excursion by brake to Harlow; start from Mile End Waste at 8.30 a.m.

FINSBURY PARK (near bandstand): 3.30, Freethought Demonstration, addressed by Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Cohen.

FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, W. Heaford.

HAMMERSMITH (near Lyric Theatre): 7, A. B. Moss, "Saints and Sinners."

HAMPSTEAD HEATH: (Fleet-road, corner of Downshire-hill): 7.15, R. P. Edwards, "The National Secular Society."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): A. B. Moss—11.30, "Saints and Sinners"; 3.15, "The End of the World."

KILBURN (High-road, corner Victoria-road): 7, A lecture.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, W. Heaford.

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Historical Review of the Old Testament."

COUNTRY.

DERBY (Central Hall, Market-place): 7.30, W. Whitney, "Anarchist Communism."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): R. Law, F.G.S.—3, "Evidences of Prehistoric Man on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Moors"; 7, "Life in the Tertiary Period and Cause of its Extinction," with lantern illustrations. Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Business meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton—August 21, e., Bethnal Green.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—August 21, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith; 28, m., Wood Green. September 4, m., Mile End; 11, m., Mile End; 18, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn; 25, m., Finsbury; a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 526 Moseley-road, Birmingham.—September 11 and 18, Manchester.

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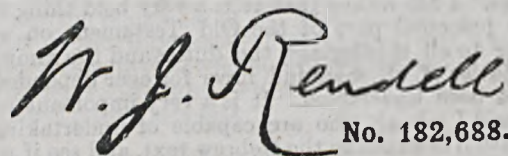
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