

Freethinker

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The Rev. Annabel Lee.

(Continued from page 242.)

WITHOUT spending further time on such details, let us come at once to the main substance of Mr. Buchanan's book. We have said that it is a novel with a purpose. From any other point of view it is quite unimportant. And its purpose is to discredit a mere "materialistic" civilisation—that is to say, a civilisation based entirely upon Science and Humanity, without aid from supernaturalism of any kind, or even from the doctrine of a future life. Mr. Buchanan goes to work in the spirit of the French literary reactionist who proclaimed some time ago "the bankruptcy of Science." I will give you, he says in effect, as much material progress as you please; poverty shall be abolished; everybody shall have an assured share of personal, domestic, and social happiness; disease shall be almost completely eliminated; accidents shall be reduced to a minimum; men and women shall live a hundred years; art and literature shall brighten everyone's existence; and the Religion of Humanity, with its temples and public services, shall satisfy the cravings of idealism; yet, for all this, your civilisation shall be an utter failure, for it still lacks the one thing necessary—the one thing *without* which all else is of no avail, and *with* which poverty, disease, and misery are glorified. He begins his story, therefore, in the Twenty-first Century, by which time he sanguinely imagines that the earthly millennium will be fully realised. From various pages we have extracted his account of the civilisation which then obtains:—

"For it was the twenty-first century—measuring the period by the chronology of the Christian Era—that is to say, from the birth of Jesus Christ onwards—and Humanity, the Great Being, the God whom the great scientists and philosophers of the last decades of the nineteenth century had prophesied, had at last come to his throne. All the prophecies, indeed, had come to pass. Man was the master of the world and of his own destiny, and Science, by abolishing nearly all the evils which had devastated the earth for so many centuries, had produced an almost perfect race.....Among the New Race of men and women Sickness, Poverty, Disease, and Crime were practically unknown, and everywhere the sun shone down on happy human organisations, familiar with the laws of life, and eager in the pursuit of social happiness.

"The arbitrary distinctions once existing between countries had been abolished, the monarchical system had been abandoned, and international war being no longer a possibility, men of every nationality were devoting themselves, under the guidance of Wise Men and moral institutions.....The citizens of London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, and Constantinople were in close personal communication; it was indeed only a few hours' flight from one of these Cities to another; and great vessels passed daily to and fro from Europe to their sister cities beyond these—New York, San Francisco, Sydney, Calcutta, and Yokohama. A few remote districts of the earth, such as Siberia, and the remote interior of Africa, remained semi-barbarous, but every year was lessening their number, and the time was close at hand when all the nations, tribes, and races of the earth should form parts of one vast Terrestrial Federation.

"Everywhere there were green trees and flowering shrubs, with stretches of velvet sward; fountains leapt in the sunlight and cooled the air with their silvery spray; and the dwellings on every side, though large and high and crowded with inhabitants, were fair to look upon architecturally, and clean and white as marble.By night, as well as day, the streets were radiant, for no sooner had the sun set than they were flooded

with golden artificial light, the very perfection of electricity.....The City had its Churches and Temples of Humanity, and therein men and women worshipped all that was best and beautiful in human character, all that shed peace and happiness on the human race.....No one was idle, and no one was without the means of subsistence.....Cheerfulness and contentedness reigned supreme."

There is one drawback, at least, to this picture; or what most people will consider a drawback. Healthy men only eat once a week, so great is the progress of chemistry. It is even hinted that in time they will only eat once a year. All that remains is to make it once a century, and give men one meal in a lifetime. A dreadful prospect, considering what pleasure a good dinner affords to men with healthy appetites!

But a more formidable drawback than this, in Mr. Buchanan's judgment, is involved in the marriage laws of this new society. The question of breeding is attended to as far as possible. Deliberate selection is substituted to a certain extent for natural selection. The unfit are eliminated, not by slaying them—although that method is applied to the *most* unpromising infants—but by preventing them from transmitting their characteristics to posterity.

"No man was entitled to marry before he had attained the age of twenty-five, or after he had passed the age of fifty; and no woman before the age of twenty-one, or after the age of thirty-five; while neither man nor woman under any circumstances could come together in lawful wedlock without a certificate of physical perfection from the Holy Office of Health."

We are even told that the marriage of the branded Unfit was "under an old and unrepealed statute punishable by Death." And it is principally upon this elimination of the Unfit—which, by the way, is a mixture of common sense and fantastic nonsense—that Mr. Buchanan founds his impeachment of the new society. "The beneficent spirit which diffused itself over the world," he says, "was merciless to the Weak," although he rather indiscreetly confesses that they "had become few and far between." The interest of this ever-dwindling minority is regarded as sufficient to outweigh that of the ever-increasing majority. Annabel Lee discovers, with much indignation, that the Religion of Humanity is of little or no avail to this minority. "Its appeals," she finds, "were to the wise and strong, not to the frail and unfit." She hears the cries of the dead martyrs of progress. "The weak have perished miserably," she exclaims, "that the strong might endure." Apparently both she and Mr. Buchanan prefer that the strong should perish and let the weak endure. Evidently they prefer a religion which appeals to "the frail and unfit" rather than one which appeals to "the wise and strong." And as Christians they are right—if Mr. Buchanan *is* a Christian; for Christianity, as Nietzsche so powerfully argues, is and always has been the religion of decadence. Man's irredeemable helplessness is its starting point; and it ends by promising all the felicities of the next life to those who have been poor, downtrodden, humble, and wretched in this life, while those who have been strong and self-sufficient in this life are doomed to everlasting punishment hereafter. Mr. Buchanan's philosophy is unsound, but his instinct is right. Christianity could only be revived, after its extinction, by appealing once more to the "frail and unfit" and using them to multiply a lower type of the human race.

Christianity says, Give to the poor; the Religion of Humanity says, Abolish poverty. Christianity says, Help the helpless; the Religion of Humanity says,

Abolish helplessness. Christianity says, Cherish the sick; the Religion of Humanity says, Yes, but try to destroy disease. Christianity says, Relieve the suffering; the Religion of Humanity says, Yes, but war against the causes of suffering. Christianity finally says, Believe and be saved; and the Religion of Humanity says, Learn and know, for only in Truth lies salvation.

Is it not apparent, at every point, that Christianity contemplates the perpetuity, at least in this world, of all the evils which it (incidentally) aims at palliating? That is the sum-total of its social philosophy, for its promises of solid lasting welfare are only realisable in the world to come.

Mr. Buchanan appears to think that scientific civilisation may make people *too* happy. One of his characters called Sister Florence, a Christian long before Annabel Lee, declares that "if there were no pain, no calamity, no struggle, there would be no Love." On another occasion she exclaims that "The heart *hardens* with happiness! The God of Sorrows knew that when he invented pain!" Certainly there is a measure of truth in this. Sympathy is generally associated with suffering. The sympathy of joy is a higher and rarer phenomenon. But even supposing that Love does depend on the conditions which Mr. Buchanan specifies—although this is only partially true—does he seriously believe that "pain, calamity, and struggle" will ever be banished from this world? What would a Schopenhauer say to this amazing notion? Science may do what it will, but it can never give man the mastery over the "chapter of accidents." Unless he becomes an omniscient God, he will always be in more or less peril from the unforeseen. There will always be tempest and shipwreck. Railway and street accidents are not likely to cease altogether. Workmen will always run some risk of being killed or maimed in dangerous occupations. Mothers will continue to lie under some jeopardy in bringing their offspring into the world. Premature deaths will occur to some extent under the most favorable conditions. And is it conceivable that parents will ever be entirely free from solicitude as to the physical, mental, and moral welfare of their children?

There is far too much suffering in the world at present, and no likelihood of its ever being too little. But if suffering *could* disappear, and man become *perfectly* happy, where would be the reason for complaint? Morality would go, you say; but morality is a means, not an end. It presupposes our weakness and mutual dependence. The more perfect we become, the less it is necessary. Were we all perfect, we should have no conception of morality. Our actions would be spontaneously right, and our relations to each other perpetually harmonious.

Let us ask Mr. Buchanan a question. He believes in the existence of God. Well, is God callous and immoral because he is omnipotent? Is he wretched because he is incapable of suffering? A negative answer shatters the whole of Mr. Buchanan's argument respecting the too happy future of the human race under the strong and wise Religion of Humanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Here and Hereafter.

THE above two words will probably suggest themes that will occupy the attention of men through all ages to come, and no doubt many attempts will be made to form some kind of connection between the two. The chief schools of thought which deal with the life and destiny of man take different views as to how their theories can be made the better to harmonise with the desires of the human heart. The Christian sometimes prays that the will of heaven may be done on earth, notwithstanding that no one has told us for a certainty what the will of heaven is. Of course there have been, and still are, many conjectures upon the subject; but conjectures are not always facts. The Secularist aims at making the earth what heaven is sometimes pictured to be. The difference between the heavens and the earth was once described by two men who were held by some to be the greatest thinkers of their time—we refer to Newman and Carlyle.

The one desired to bring the heavens down to the earth, while the aim of the other was to raise the earth up to the heavens. An important feature in Secular philosophy is that it hopes to realise on earth things attainable now and here; while the orthodox believer relies mainly upon expectation, realisable, if at all, in conjecture-land. Another distinction between the two schools is still more marked by the fact that the one depends on knowledge, and the other on belief; one walks by sight, and the other by faith. The desires of the one are as clearly centred here as those of the others are in some supposed possible hereafter. One regards the earth as the improvable home of man; the other looks upon it as a wilderness wherein he is a wanderer on the way to an eternal, imperishable abode beyond the stars. The difference is sometimes described as things which are seen and temporal, and things which are unseen and eternal. The hope of the Secularist implies that his desires are to be in some measure attainable on earth, while the belief of the Christian in some future growing out of the present is only a question, at the most, of possibility.

The first view is *this* worldism, the second view is that of some *other* worldism. Of the one we know much, but of the other we have no knowledge. Christians frequently boast that their aim is to make the best of both worlds; that, however, in our opinion, is inadmissible. Secularists with their views may reasonably expect reward for good effort in this world, while the Christians have no solid grounds for any direct reward on earth. Thus the aims of the two are clearly different, not only in their objects, but also in their results. The issues are as wide apart as the supposed heaven is from the earth. We speak of earth that may be felt, and of heaven as being beyond our reach. We do not now question whether people are right who maintain that the kingdom of heaven is within us, and that hell is what a man's own conscience makes it. We are contending only that earth is our home, where our loved ones dwell, and where happiness, so far as it can be achieved, is to be found. We also combat the theory that heaven and hell are tangible realities; they are not merely figures of speech—they are two of the cardinal doctrines of the New Testament Christianity. Another broad distinction which is generally made by the representatives of the two views under consideration is, that earth represents the secular and heaven the sacred. This is alleged to apply to persons, places, and literature. As a philosophy, these views are concerned with everything that pertains to human life, and with all beliefs as to the alleged hereafter. The former find their basis in Secularism, and the latter in the different theories of supernaturalism. Secularism adopts a policy of making the best of life on earth, deeming that our first and highest duty; while Christianity seeks to make this life subordinate to a never-ending existence, holding that

Nothing is worth a thought beneath
But how you may escape the death
That never, never dies.

Secularism teaches that the whole of man's faculties are clearly adapted for this world, and that all their requirements of the true, the useful, and the beautiful may be obtained by industry, art, and science. All that nature, in its normal condition, does not supply may be obtained under suitable conditions by the efforts of genius, skill, and labor. Attempts have been made to show that the Christian form of supernaturalism is the true Secularism. If this be so, why do not Christians accept and practise Secularism? But the illusion vanishes, and the bubble bursts, when we note the difference between Christian statements and Christian practice. In daily life these professors depend upon secular agencies for the progress in the world, but in their religious devotions they would have us infer that they regard theological teachings as their real providence. Again, the allegation that Christianity is the true Secularism is refuted by St. Paul, who said: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." There is nothing secular about this; all our hopes, as Secularists, concerning anybody are confined to this life. How can we hope in an existence of which we know nothing, and in which we have taken no share? It is a singular fact that the "most miserable of men" on Sundays are Christians. They

confess before God that they are "miserable sinners," and that there is no "health in them." Evidently the hope in Christ does not afford them much happiness. One would hesitate to speak thus of Christians in general, outside of the churches, in the presence of their muscular members. No, it is on Sundays when they confess to be miserable, and that just at the time when they are said to be filled with hope in Christ. Butler tells us that at one time Christians hanged the cat on Monday for killing mice on Sunday.

We have quoted Paul about the miserable, temporary, fleeting earth; let us now consult Peter about the lack of stability of the heavens. He says (2nd book, chap. iii.) that the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the earth will be burnt up, and the elements will be dissolved. Here, then, the ideas of a temporal, eternal heaven are both exploded; at any rate, a mind impressed by Paul and Peter would not be anxious about social progress or secular philosophy in any of its many applications to man's life. But the alternative, according to Paul, is merely a question of sensual appetites. "If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."

To call this Secularism is to indulge in one of the many current misconceptions of Secular philosophy. No sensible Secularist ever makes the be-all and end-all of life an affair of the stomach, notwithstanding that it usually absorbs much attention and gives much trouble. People have little time, and less inclination, to make nice distinctions as philosophers do; yet, on important problems, it may be useful to see that they are supplied with ascertained facts, by which accurate judgments may be formed. The permanent good of man cannot be destroyed by errors, although they may delay its achievement for ages. Experience shows that many men have a strong desire to be in the right. Plato observes: "Unwillingly is the soul deprived of truth." No doubt this is true. We do not believe in the popular doctrine that men generally desire to be in the wrong, however numerous their errors may be. Many men's opinions are weighed in the false scales of custom; but all this admits of reformation. The time arrives in a man's life when important views of heaven and earth press for a solution and call for a decision. One result of this mental activity may be the discovery that truth alone can serve or save mankind. It has been said that truth is the measure of knowledge, and that all else besides is only ignorance, or something worse. But what is truth? It is the duty of everyone to endeavor to find an answer to this important question. Some have alleged that whosoever discovers the nature of things has found the truth. In common speech we say truth is what is self-evident, or that which can be proved. Whatever the subject may be, logic, experiment, and observation are the agencies Secularism uses to establish moral truth, and to ascertain what should be believed either about heaven or earth.

Whatever may be said, men will pursue the course of life which seems best to them; hence the vast importance of their faculties being cultivated, in order that their choice of conduct may be wise and noble. It is a common saying that one man may lead a horse to water, but a hundred could not make him drink; but in a healthy state of society no one attempts coercion in the formation of opinions. Whatever of intellectual food we supply, the assimilation is an individual matter. Secularism specially recommends the study of the order and duties of the earth, leaving the heavens alone until some knowledge of them is attainable. The origin of the universe and a possible future may be left over for consideration in leisure moments—that is, if the subject is thought deserving of any consideration at all. As to man's reappearance beyond this life, if it is to be, no power can prevent it. What is to be will be in its own due time. The inevitable must happen, and no belief or disbelief can prevent it. The most fervent belief cannot secure man's reappearance in another world. That is a question, not of faith, but of fact. Belief proves nothing as to the truth of what is believed. To modernise St. Paul's language, he says that the future cannot be the subject of knowledge through our senses or our minds. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things God has prepared for those who love him. We can know nothing about them; they are beyond human ken.

The study of the various beliefs entertained by the inhabitants of different nations as to what is to constitute their supposed future home when they have "shuffled off their mortal coil" shows that such beliefs are the result of imagination, and not of reason. Persons invariably picture their heaven in accordance with the creed or belief in which they have been trained. Thus we find that the Indian thinks that his heaven will be an "everlasting hunting-ground," where he will have unlimited sport in chasing wild animals. This surely would be healthier exercise and a more pleasant occupation than that afforded in the Christian's heaven, which, we are told, is the abode of the "souls of those who had been slain," and a kind of receptacle for all sorts of characters, including criminals and oppressors, men who were considered too corrupt to live on earth, but regarded as proper candidates for heaven. If the New Testament be true, the brave, the noble, and the patriotic are oftentimes excluded from the portals of the celestial city. The passports required for admission there are faith, submission, and contentment. Men who have resisted the tyrant, who have struggled for liberty against the powers that be, who have won freedom of thought, are not deemed worthy the crown of glory unless they believe in "Christ and him crucified." A permanent sojourn in a place that rejects the purest and best of our race cannot be desired by any but moral invalids and intellectual mendicants.

It is sometimes urged that through giving supreme attention to earth we lose all possible advantages of heaven. But why so? In seeking to improve mundane existence we deal with known facts, but in exercising our faculties upon what is called heaven we are simply acting upon guess work. By making the best of this life we thereby secure the best preparation for any other.

CHARLES WATTS.

Ridiculing Religion.

THE other week I was announced to lecture in a northern town on "The Absurdity of Christianity." On my arrival in the place I was informed that exception had been taken to my subject, on the ground that to announce such a lecture was overstepping the bounds of decent controversy. It may be mentioned, in passing, that the larger number of those who complained had not attended my previous lectures in the town, and did not attend this one. Consequently, their objection was more in the nature of a dislike to Freethought meetings in general than to this one in particular. And, as a matter of fact, my address did not, as these premature critics evidently imagined, deal with the ridiculous stories contained in the Bible, or with the laughable aspect of Christianity as a whole; it was solely concerned with the absurdity of a civilised people priding themselves on their progressive character, and yet professing to regulate their lives by a body of doctrines directly at variance with all that we know to be true.

And even if my lecture had dealt exclusively with the laughable aspect of Christianity, it is hard to see why it should have been objected to. I did not create the Christian religion; I was not even trying to perpetuate it. If it has a ridiculous side, the responsibility rests primarily with those who fashioned it, and, next, with those who continue to believe it. If, on the contrary, it has not a ridiculous side, then it is I who render myself a laughing-stock in trying to give it one. In either case I do not see that exception can reasonably be taken to anyone ridiculing a religion, if they feel so inclined. It may be a question of expediency where and when it is done, or it may be an artistic question *how* it is done; but otherwise it seems to me to be as allowable to laugh at a man's belief concerning God as at his beliefs concerning Lord Salisbury or Mr. Campbell-Bannerman.

Had the objection been confined to this particular occasion, there would have been little need to pay special attention to it; but, as a matter of fact, it is one of the commonest and, to the Christian, one of the heaviest charges brought against Freethought advocacy. Needless to say, it is not true that the Secularist spends his existence in cachinnatory exercises at the expense of Christianity; but, even if it were, the

objection would be an utterly irrelevant one. To refrain from ridiculing a belief because of its sacred character, and to ridicule it because its sacred character has been destroyed, are at bottom identical positions. One's attitude, in either case, is determined by whether the belief is sacred or not. As Dr. Arnold said: "To tax anyone with want of reverence because he pays no respect to what we venerate is either *irrelevant*, or is a mere confusion. The fact, so far as it is true, is no reproach, but an honor; because to reverence all persons and all things is absolutely wrong; reverence shown to that which does not deserve it is no virtue; no, not even an amiable weakness, but a plain folly and sin. But if it be meant that he is wanting in proper reverence, not respecting what is to be really respected, that is assuming the whole question at issue, because what we call divine he calls an idol; and as, supposing we are in the right that we are bound to fall down and worship, so, supposing him to be in the right, he is no less bound to pull it to the ground and destroy it."

To ask, therefore, that we who do not believe in the pretensions, or truthfulness, or usefulness of Christianity shall treat it with the same solemnity and reverence as believers are in the habit of doing is to ask us to blot out all distinction between truth and falsehood, or between what is plausible and what is absurd.

Although it may be replied that two wrongs do not make a right, still it is worth while noting that Christians themselves are by no means slow to ridicule the religious or non-religious beliefs of other people—a practice in which the Bible sets them a fairly good example. I have never heard of Christians reprobating the conduct of Elijah in ridiculing the prophets of Baal, although I have read a description of his language as expressing "sublime scorn"; Protestants delight in ridiculing the Roman Catholic ceremonials, Catholics are equally ready to laugh at the absurdities of Protestant pretensions, and both join in treating with contempt the religious beliefs of non-Christian peoples. Ridiculing religion is only wrong when it is the Christian religion that is the object of irreverence.

It is curious, too, that Christians seldom or never ask themselves why it is that their religion lends itself so readily to ridicule. Surely, when one can so easily ridicule Christianity, and when Christians themselves are so annoyed at the performance, there must arise the suspicion that there is something inherently absurd about the creed. Surely some part of the fault, if fault there be, must rest with the creed that invites ridicule from nearly all who dissent from it. Indeed, it has always passed my comprehension how anyone who is not already narcotised by the creed he is criticising, or in fear of the "respectabilities" he is outraging, can discuss such subjects as the Biblical miracles, the virgin birth, the resurrection, or similar tales, and still retain his gravity. There are, after all, as many muscles drawing our mouth up as draw them down, and if it be sinful to laugh at religion the fault must lie with the deity who endowed man with a sense of the ridiculous.

But it is not without reason that Christians protest against the use of ridicule, and insist on religion being discussed with a "fitting sense of reverence." For ridicule is the deadliest, because the only effective, weapon one can bring against a venerable imposture. There is a stage in the history of every belief and of every institution when common sense is powerless against it, and then the only remedy is to laugh it out of existence. It was the laughter of Lucian that helped to shake down the tottering pagan worship, as the laughter of Cervantes cleared off the decrepit chivalry of his day, and as the ridicule of Voltaire covered the Church with infamy in the last century. I know it is the fashion nowadays, by timid writers who hasten to avert unpleasant consequences from their own heresy by reprobating that of more robust thinkers, to say that Voltaire's method is no longer applicable, the day for ridiculing Christianity has passed. Yet, in my opinion, it is as true to-day as ever that "men will not cease to be persecutors until they have ceased to be absurd," and they never cease to be ridiculous until they themselves have grown strong enough to laugh at the absurdities that erewhile enchained them. That religion to-day has become a subject for ridicule is only the price it pays for its former greatness. When a monarch is dethroned

his pedestal becomes a pillory, and the greatness of his former estate is the exact measure of his present degradation.

Moreover, the question might well suggest itself to Freethinkers: "Are we likely to convince the Christian world of the absurd and untruthful nature of many of its beliefs by approaching their consideration with an air of solemn profundity, or protestations of extreme veneration?" Are we not likely in many cases, and by such methods, to rather impress Christians with the transcendent value and importance of their beliefs? To my mind, it admits of little question that the spectacle of Mr. Gladstone and Professor Huxley discussing the miracle of the Gadarene swine with portentous gravity does as much good to Christianity as harm. The important point in such a discussion—namely, the fitness of the subject for grave controversy at the hands of a political leader and a great scientific authority at the close of the nineteenth century—is conceded. The believer looks on satisfied, whatever be the issue. You are showing him that his beliefs, the absurdity of which was gradually dawning on his mind, are of a serious and important character, deserving the most solemn and respectful treatment, and that is enough. He does not mind being thought wrong on a matter of such a grave nature; it is being ridiculous he dreads; hence his protests against satire or sarcasm; and it seems to me tolerably certain that, so long as we agree to treat religion with a long face and ridiculous protestations of respect, we are doing our best to excite feelings of attachment towards beliefs that we are desirous people should despise.

It is absurd to expect that religious people will ever regard their beliefs in their true character so long as our own writings or speeches are full of expressions of reverence towards the beliefs we are attacking. Such expressions are entirely out of place. Reverence may be defined as a compound feeling made up of fear, wonder, and respect; and of these three qualities the first is absolutely inimical to accurate reasoning, the second is disturbing, and the third should follow examination, not precede it. A mind dominated by fear can reason neither coherently nor logically, and it is one of the principal objections to Christianity that, by its threatened penalties of an after life, backed up by actual persecution, it has partly paralysed the mind's operation, and thus prevented people forming correct conclusions concerning its teachings. Even wonder must be counted as a disturbing element in the formation of sound opinion; and clearly, until we have examined, we cannot tell whether the subject under examination is worthy of respect or not. Thus respect or reverence for a belief, as a belief, is altogether out of place, and must create an initial bias that can only serve to vitiate the value of conclusions afterwards reached.

Why should a question of religion be approached with greater respect than other questions? To say that it involves greater issues is a simple begging of the question. So far as we can see, the manner in which a man votes is of far greater consequence than the church he attends; while correct ideas as to the function of governments are of infinitely greater importance than beliefs concerning the constitution of heaven. The fact that a man sincerely holds a belief to be true in no sense entitles it to our respect.

It is a common thing to find worthy men cherishing unworthy beliefs, and intelligent men entertaining stupid ones. All that can reasonably be demanded is that, so long as we are convinced that beliefs are held honestly and sincerely, those holding them shall be treated with consideration and respect. This no Freethinker would deny. What we challenge is the absurd position that the religious *opinions* of people are entitled to a special measure of respect, or should be treated differently to their opinions on social subjects or the structure of the social system. I do not deny the right of any man to hold and promulgate any belief, no matter how absurd; I would even assert it; but I do deny his right to demand that I shall treat his opinions with the same gravity that he does himself.

I am not arguing that there is no place for the serious discussion of religious beliefs, or that we should never meet the religious man in a serious and friendly manner. All that I aim at showing is that ridicule has its proper and legitimate place in all controversy in general, and in

religious controversy in particular. And I am convinced that, so long as we discuss religious questions on bended knees and with bated breath, we not only divest our examination of a large part of its value, but tacitly concede the truthfulness and usefulness of the system we are attacking. Let us study religions in their origin and development, their place in the history of civilisation, and their significance in the development of the human mind—let us study them in these directions, seriously if you will. Laughter or ridicule would be out of place here. But when we find these belated survivals of savage times gravely offered as meat and drink for the matured life of to-day, then ridicule is the most potent weapon that can be used to awaken people to the absurd nature of the proposal and the impossibility of its realisation.

C. COHEN.

Begone, Dull Priest.

The priest was not always dull. Once he sat on Jupiter's throne, holding the bolts, and the royal eagle was at his side. Once he spoke words of fire and conviction, and the people heaved like the sea, and waves of ecstasy and fear and aspiration passed over the great congregations. Once a priest put his foot on the neck of an emperor; and the act was appropriate, for the priest of that age was a masterful and mettlesome man, who had a proud sense of his divine mission, and a capacity for wielding the sword temporal as well as the sword spiritual. Then the priest was monarch of souls. He spoke, and the seven thunders uttered their chorus in echoing homage.

But to-day the priest is dull. He has no spirit of his own, and cannot rouse that of his hearers. He stands in his pulpit, clothed in white, and his teaching is as colorless as his surplice. He is bewitched in his wooden tower. In the New Testament it is said of Jesus Christ: "Seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain; and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him; and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor," etc. I am not concerned with the problem whether Jesus did or did not speak the Eight Blessings or utter the Sermon on the Mount. Very probably he did not deliver anything like the discourse given in the Gospels. That is not the point. The point is that the early Christians had a vivid conception of a prophet who could confront the folk with an earnest, live, telling message which represented the highest truth to himself and his listeners. But to-day the priest is worse than dumb. Unkind destiny and the necessity of earning a living send him, Sunday after Sunday, up the pulpit steps to face an audience of men and women who await a divine rescript. And he opens his mouth, and teaches them—

Nothing!

He babbles; he repeats texts; he recites snatches of mediæval philosophy; he talks of the Infinite, of Heaven, Hell, Death, and Life. But it is mere sound—not even fury—signifying nothing. It is all a dead letter. The priest ladles out pure vacuum to the people. He looks vacuous while he does it; so do they. At the theatre men and women laugh and weep; at the political meeting they clap and cheer; at the Freethought hall they follow the argument with animation, and take joy in the discussion. But at church a vast Yawn pervades the place and its inhabitants. The pews yawn; the pulpit yawns; the choir yawns; the red and yellow saints in the windows yawn.

You remember how the Normans tried to ferret Hereward the Wake out of the Fens; and how, on the causeway across the swamps, they set up a tower, and placed in it the old hag of Brandon, who muttered incantations and curses? And then how the Englishmen set fire to the reeds, and the flames swept along the causeway, driving the Normans into the mud, and consuming the old sorceress in her tower? Sometimes I have felt homing priests could thus be done away with, and the reign of hypocrisy ended. But I repent of such wicked thoughts. I must not imitate the Christian Inquisition, or the Christians who burned Christians at Smithfield. And besides, the Christian priests are usually very good fellows in private. I know no better-hearted men. But

they are insufferably dull. Their sermons are drier than the Sahara, and more melancholy than the Ancient Mariners' sea. Their fate is worse than that of Prometheus. There was a wondrous passion and brutal majesty in the poor Fire-thief's struggles. He lay chained on the rock, and chafed and groaned volcanically while the vultures gnawed his liver. But the curate, the vicar, the rector, the archdeacon, the dean, the bishop, the archbishop, alas! they chatter bewitched in their ornamental towers, and utter slumbrous negations. *God*, they say; and not a brain responds. *Life*, they say; and not a soul thrills. *Love*, they say; and not an eye brightens. *Hope*, they say; and not a bosom expands. *Hell*, they say; and not a hair stands on end. I am ready to weep over the poor priest's lot, but when I look at him his inanity dries my tears in their founts; I feel too vacuous to shed one dewy drop. I try to smile, but the priest's stony gaze, as he reads his meaningless legends, paralyzes my risible muscles, and the smile freezes in its birth. Yet, when he descends from the pulpit the priest is perfectly human. He chats eagerly on politics, debates on art and science and archæology, and takes a first-class interest in tithes and preferments. The man is good company; the priest is terrifically, completely, infinitely, and hopelessly dull.

Like Diogenes, I am inclined to order this priest to stand out of my sunlight. I have eyes to see the universe, without needing the professional guidance of the priest. Have you ever been in an old castle or abbey, and been bored by the monotonous jabber of the "guide"? The wretched man tells you a thousand things about the historic spot, and yet he has never seen it! No, never seen it. He has walked about it, and through it, and learned to patter long sentences of its history; and yet he has never felt its beauty, never seen its significance in the life of the nation. And so the priest intones his explanation of the world which (as a priest) he does not understand. Let him step aside. I will see God for myself; or, if there is but an unworthy, anthropomorphic image on the throne, I will look at that also for myself, and criticise it, and deny its validity, and ask for a more dignified God; and if none appears, I shall know that the hour is not yet come, and that either God never was at all, or my understanding cannot seize the conception of deity. In either case, I will judge for myself. Nor do I want the priest to expound my psychology for me. He will tell me my faculties are the sport of a Holy Ghost or a Devil. This makes nothing clear to me. I cannot comprehend myself on such a theory of the human mind. I would rather observe the facts of the intellectual life for myself. Nor will I invoke the priest to teach me history. He will find "God in History"; but I find human effort, human achievement, human passion, human morality, human failure, human progress, human ideals.

And in the hour of death?

Not then, above all, shall I want the priest.

The other day an old man of seventy-six sent for me. He was dying; and he was anxious that no priest should mutter false doctrine over his head, or fret him with artificial appeals to "believe." I talked with him of his past life, his struggles, his sacrifices. He begged me to speak at his funeral, and I said I would speak as a son might speak of his father. The dying Freethinker thanked me, and smiled. I could work no miracles for him; I could offer him no paradise; I could only give him my humble sympathy. It was enough.

F. J. GOULD.

Back Again.

AFTER nearly four months' absence from England, I returned from New York on Thursday, the 13th inst. When I started from Liverpool in December last, I anticipated a long and active tour throughout the United States and Canada; but a combination of circumstances prevented me from carrying out my intentions. The number of Freethinkers on the American continent is great, and they are constantly increasing. There is, however, a most deplorable lack of Secular organisation. Still, but for other causes, this apathy

would not have prevented me from having sufficient engagements to have occupied my time up to May. Thanks to the kindness of Mr. E. M. Macdonald, the editor of the *Truthseeker*, who communicated by personal letter with over a thousand subscribers to his paper, I received applications for two hundred lectures, besides invitations to join in several debates. Mr. Macdonald proved, as he has always done, one of my best American friends. He and his brother George are the principal directors of the Freethought movement in America, and it is to be hoped that their united efforts in the cause of mental freedom will meet with deserved success.

My visit to America was marred by the unfortunate incident of my severe illness, to which I have already referred in my letters from the States. It was decided by all my medical advisers that I must give up all idea of lecturing, and return home as soon as my strength would permit. I thus had to cancel engagements which represented close upon a thousand dollars (£200). Dr. E. B. Foote, of New York, hearing of my sickness, sent for me to come to his charming house at Larchmont, and prevailed upon me to stay with him until he should fit me for my voyage home. For over two weeks I enjoyed his hospitality, and in that time he made "another man" of me. He left nothing undone either day or night to enable me to be restored to my normal condition. I shall never fail to appreciate his kindness. And I must also record my gratitude and admiration for the persistent services of Miss Cresswell, the doctor's experienced nurse. To her I am indebted largely for the improvement I made under the Doctor's guidance. Her patience and gentle care were only equalled by her ability in the sick room.

My voyage home was a pleasant one, calm weather and sunshine enhancing the enjoyment of the trip. It was an agreeable contrast to the rough and tempestuous journey out.

It may not be generally known on this side of the Atlantic that saloon passengers of all nationalities, on sailing from New York, have to pay a war tax towards liquidating the debt incurred in the recent conflict with Spain. I was charged three dollars (twelve shillings) in addition to my regular passage-money. Personally, I hardly think it is dignified upon the part of America to compel Englishmen, for instance, to pay towards the cost of a war for which they were in no way responsible.

Well, I am back again, and, although still too weak to engage in active work, I hope in a few months to resume my platform propaganda.

CHARLES WATTS.

No Inspiration About this, but it is Nearly as Silly.

"I was bathing in that pleasant sea near Marseilles one summer's afternoon, when I discovered a very large fish, with his jaws quite extended, approaching me with the greatest velocity; there was no time to be lost, nor could I possibly avoid him. I immediately reduced myself to as small a size as possible, by closing my feet and placing my hands also near my sides, in which position I passed directly between his jaws, and into his stomach, where I remained some time in total darkness, and comfortably warm. The fish was discovered by the people on board an Italian trader, then sailing by, who harpooned him in a few minutes. As soon as he was brought on board I heard the crew consulting how they should cut him up, so as to preserve the greatest quantity of oil. As I understood Italian, I was in most dreadful apprehensions lest their weapons employed in this business should destroy me also; therefore, I stood as near the centre as possible. They began by opening the belly. As soon as I perceived a glimmering of light, I called out lustily to be released from a situation in which I was now almost suffocated. It is impossible for me to do justice to the degree and kind of astonishment which sat upon every countenance at hearing a human voice issue from a fish, but more so at seeing a naked man walk upright out of his body."—*The Travels and Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen.*

"I will teach the people to reason aright," said Logic. "I will instruct them in their social duties," said Ethics. "I will explain the meaning of existing things," said Science. "Yes, yes," cried Religion. "But where do I come in?" "That is what we want to know," said the others.—*Exchange.*

Acid Drops.

MR. W. T. STEAD has made a new Kipling discovery. "The soul of Kipling," he says, "is Methodist to the core." We hope the object of this eulogy won't read it for some time. He is still in a weak state, and relapses are always dangerous.

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes has a characteristic fling at Mr. Pinero's play in the *Methodist Times*. "No impartial critic," he says, "could read the accounts of that play which appeared in Monday's newspapers without feeling that the whole thing was utterly saturated with the vilest immorality. Since the dark days of the post-Restoration drama the English stage has never sunk to such a degraded level as to-day." Note the reverend gentleman's quiet assumption that he himself is the type of the impartial critic. Note also his gross ignorance of the history of the English drama. There were comedies written in the Elizabethan age quite as "blue" as any that were written during the reign of Charles II., with a license of language that it was absolutely impossible to excel.

Mr. Hughes alludes to two plays drawing crowded audiences in London which "are a disgrace and a reproach to a nation that professes Christianity." We can only guess at the identity of these two plays. Is one of them *The Belle of New York*?

You can put anything you like into a play as long as you consecrate it to the glorious cause of Christianity, even if you leave out wit, truth, and common sense. We never heard that Mr. Hughes had said anything in reprobation of *The Sign of the Cross*. Yet it contains one scene of downright drunkenness and harlotry, and one scene of attempted rape. When a man seizes a woman upon the stage with a view to the worst form of criminal assault, it is about time to cry "Hold, enough!" But the clericals saw nothing wrong in that episode. Of course the rape wasn't carried through, but the attempt was sufficiently suggestive to the sweet things of seventeen, about whose virtue and modesty Mr. Price Hughes and the Bishop of Wakefield are so solicitous.

The Bishop of Wakefield, who so savagely denounces Mr. Pinero's play, has of course not seen it. Why should he? A clergyman's opinions are not usually founded on facts. Did not Father Dooley, down at West Ham the other day, conscientiously denounce the *Freethinker* as a vile, immoral, obscene publication, although he had never seen a copy of it in his life.

Lying for the glory of gawd is still cultivated as a fine art. The Bishop of Wakefield, whose scathing remarks about Pinero's play, *The Gay Lord Quex*, caused universal comment, afterwards admitted to a *Daily Mail* interviewer that he purposely exaggerated in order to produce a sensation. Christian Union cannot be so very far off when the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and the Right Rev. the Bishop of Wakefield can thus occupy common ground.

The Bishop of Carlisle contributes his quota to the anti-Sunday-newspaper chorus. Naturally he hates the "growing secularisation" of the blessed Sabbath. "I have seen the Paddington station," he says, "on a Sunday morning in the summer, when people are going down to the river in their flannels, and I have no hesitation in saying that it is a sight to make angels weep." Substitute "parsons" for "angels," and the Bishop is about right.

The *Daily News* is making all the capital it can out of the pious objections to the Sunday issue of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*. It prints long reports of protest meetings and resolutions. Moreover, it gives a "Saturday page for Home Reading," chiefly intended for "the religious world." We guess, however, that if the Sunday edition pays its contemporaries—and time will show—the *Daily News* will not lag behind in the competition for the nimble penny.

The Ruthin Rural District Council's brains have been agitated by the question of Sunday cycling, which is considered to have "a demoralising effect on young people." We suppose this means that it keeps them away from the gospel-shops. But of course that is a serious matter, and the Council want it remedied. They propose that public-houses shall only have a six days' license. This would prevent cyclists from obtaining any refreshment on Sunday as *boni fide* travellers, and, as they must eat and drink, it is expected that they would stay at home; and as the gospel-shop is the only place of recreation open when the public-house is shut, it is further expected that they would turn into the Lord's house if only to avoid monotony and suicide.

One Councillor, Mr. Powell Jones, protested on behalf of shop assistants and clerks, who ought to have a spin in the country on Sunday, which was the only day at their disposal. Even ministers of the Gospel cycled to their churches on

Sunday, and why shouldn't other people ride the iron horse as well as the men of God? Yes, *why?* We should like to hear that question answered.

"If we lose our Sabbath, we shall lose our religion." So says the Rev. C. Lee Dunham, of Green-lanes Wesleyan Church. And he is about right. It is not the power of God, but the strategy of ecclesiasticism, that keeps Christianity going.

Southend Town Council has decided that "kids" mustn't have new toys on Sunday. Shops that are let hereafter on Pier Hill will not be allowed to supply juveniles on the Lord's Day. Councillor Sykes says it is preposterous, but he is only an "infidel."

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been holding forth to "men only" in Lambeth Parish Church on "Unselfishness," of which virtue he is presumably a striking illustration, as he only takes £15,000 a year to preach "Blessed be ye poor," while hundreds of the lower clergy are said to have a hard job to live decently. His Grace had a good deal to say about husbands' treatment of their wives. Of course it was the wife's duty to obey, as there had to be a boss in every house; but the husband was bound to "do everything to make it easy and pleasant" for her to knuckle under. What a charming view of household bliss! We should like to know if the Archbishop carries out the Pauline theory at home, and if he finds it a success. We should also like to have his wife's opinion on the matter. Perhaps she is like a good many other women who smile at the airs their lords give themselves, and manage to get their own way in most things, in spite of the rooster's strutting.

Adam and Eve were, indeed, driven out of their garden, not by an angel with a flaming sword, but by a certain Charles Darwin with a steel pen.

Talmage has a tremendous advantage over other preachers. He can deliver the same sermon over and over again to the same audience; and, as it is impossible to turn the leaves of a dictionary as fast as he can talk, no one knows the difference.

Reviewing two books on the war in Cuba, the *Outlook* comments as follows on the conduct of the negro troops on the American side: "Those mild, inglorious children of the plantation proved very demons on the battlefield. They stood revealed in their hereditary lust of combat and blood. They seemed to mingle with the instinct of war the idea of a religious rite. They shouted hymns as they advanced. They prayed to heaven, when halted, not for succour and protection, but for further battle and bloodshed."

J. H. Hallard, in a letter to the *Outlook*, declares that the Broad Church clergy are dishonest, and do not believe in the foundations of the Christian religion at all. Particularly they do not believe in the Immaculate Conception. Mr. Hallard writes as follows about the famous Dr. Jowett: "It was my fate (or my luck?) to be at Balliol in the time of Jowett's headship, and it did not take long even for an undergraduate to perceive that Jowett certainly did *not* believe in these 'foundations.' There can be no doubt, for example, that he did not believe in the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Resurrection. In fact, had he dared (which naturally he did not), he would have given the same answer as did the late Professor Robertson Smith to an anxiously-inquiring friend of mine who once burst into the Professor's study and asked him point-blank. Robertson Smith leaned back in his chair laughing, and said: 'No, certainly I do not. It is a mere legend.'"

The sewerage system in London cannot be so complete as has been claimed. None of the Christian Evidence Lecturers has been carried away.

Ma is larruping Pa with the broomstick. The children are fighting over a piece of pie. Over the piano there is a beautiful motto in a gilt frame. The beautiful motto asks the deity to bless their home. So like the Old Boy!

Mr. Will Thorne has been selected by the Gas Workers' Union to stand as Parliamentary candidate for South-west Ham. We hope the local Freethinkers will press him on the subject of religious equality, and not rest satisfied with evasive answers. Mr. Thorne is chiefly responsible for the rating of several of the Labor men on the West Ham Town Council in respect to the *Freethinker* question.

Most Christians are quite satisfied with the present state of things in Crete. Their co-religionists on that island are comparatively speaking, in clover, and what does it matter that fifty thousand Mohammedans are reduced to destitution and despair? "Because we are Moslems," says a writer in a Turkish journal published weekly at Candia, "men without defence or protection, ignorant and neglected, and deserving for that reason the compassion of the world, nobody cares

what happens to us." A cry from the depths like this shows the hollowness of Christian benevolence. It is not true charity, but religious partisanship.

Happy marriages are not made in heaven, but heaven is made in happy marriages.

A few decades ago the first missionary was eaten on the Fiji Islands. To-day, it is alleged, some hundreds of young Fijians attend Pleasant Sunday Afternoons. All the waste places of the world could be christianised in the same way, but the trouble is to make a beginning. The sky-pilots of our day are unwilling to start the ball rolling, or rather the pot boiling.

Men and women who make no hypocritical pretensions to being good on one day out of every seven are called sinners.

The costume for the Mephistopheles in opera is never complete without a cloak.

Here is an edifying advertisement, culled from a paper there is no need to mention: "C. M. S.—Clergyman's Son, 14, needs a Refined Holiday Home from 14th to 30th inst.; bright Christian lad in good health; small payment if desired.—Pray write to-day," etc. What cool assurance in the assumption that well-to-do people will give a clergyman's boy a free holiday in their own home for the sake of his sublime company?

Sir Francis Jeune has granted Mrs. Millicent Mary Samson a decree nisi with costs against her husband, and given her the custody of the children. According to the evidence, which was not contradicted, the Rev. Gavin Hamilton Samson is a bad lot. Perhaps he has tried to model himself too faithfully upon Old Testament characters.

A London man of God, the Rev. Mr. Arnold, vicar of St. Matthew's, Oakley-square, N.W., took a copy of the *Sunday Daily Mail* up in the pulpit with him and burnt it in the sight of his congregation. If all the men of God in the metropolis will burn a copy of the *Mail* every Sunday, it will be good business for the proprietors.

Rev. James Faughnan, an Irish Roman Catholic priest, was charged at the London Guildhall with being drunk and disorderly in Old Broad-street. He gave two false addresses to the police, but he was evidently known to the authorities of the Roman Catholic diocese of Westminster.

Rev. Edward Lefeuvre, rector of Grouville, Jersey, is accused by his churchwardens and parishioners of gross intemperance. They allege that he came to church on Easter Sunday intoxicated, and during the celebration of the Holy Communion drank all the wine. This was too much Blood of Christ for one communicant, though it ought to have sanctified him for the rest of his life.

Another man of God in trouble is the Rev. L. Elwyn Lewis, rector of Tyfield, Ongar, Essex. Last year he figured in the law courts as the sender of anonymous and offensive post-cards, and a large number of his flock want to see his back instead of his face. His own vestry protest against his continuance in office, and demand that measures shall be taken for his removal. A guarantee fund is being freely subscribed to expedite the process of his expulsion.

Salvationists now require medical certificates from us before they desist from "raising hell" in front of our houses where we are lying sick. This, at any rate, is what we gather from the report of a case at Battersea. A Salvation Army adjutant, being summoned for playing and singing outside the Park Town Hotel after being requested to desist, admitted that he had been told that the landlady was ill; but when a medical certificate was produced in court his counsel said: "If this had been shown to us before, we should have acted differently."

Where does Mr. Barlow, a vestryman of Christ Church, Accrington, expect to go when he dies? At a recent meeting he remarked that something had been said about the eastward position, but for his part he did not care how the parson stood—he might stand on his head if he liked. Whereat there was "loud laughter."

The General Medical Council has had another go at Dr. Allinson for calling himself "Dr.," and he has been fined £5 with £5 5s. costs. Of course Dr. Allinson is really as much a "Dr." as any of his persecutors. They deprived him of his degree for what they called "unprofessional conduct," but really for laughing at the great drug-mystery and talking common sense to the public. It is perfectly monstrous that the Medical Trade Union should be allowed to exercise such powers. All the public requires of them is a certificate of the medical competence of gentlemen who aspire to get a living by attending the sick. Everything beyond medical competence is a matter for the public to judge about.

Referring to the drink traffic in Africa, the *Daily News* says it has exterminated whole tribes, the stuff supplied to the blacks being of the strongest and most injurious kind. "Nothing can be more monstrous," our contemporary adds, "than that a Christian country should destroy the habits of decency and sobriety which Mohammedanism fosters and preserves."

Mr. Albert B. Lloyd, of Leicester, who has travelled in Central Africa, preached the other day in Trinity Church by special permission of the Bishop of Peterborough. In the course of his address he accused the Roman Catholic priests in Uganda of organising drinking parties for the natives. As a Protestant, he was pleased to find that the natives were turning against the Roman Catholic religion on the ground that it was too much like their own superstitions. Yes, but the Roman Catholic religion is historic Christianity.

At one of the recent missionary meetings in London a soul-saver amongst the heathen ridiculed a native belief about a great spirit who runs off with the moon under his arm. Well, of course it is funny, but there are quite as funny things in the Bible. How about Joshua, who stopped the sun and moon during a battle? We laugh at other people's superstitions, and pull a solemn face over our own.

Oliver Fletcher and John Cox have been sentenced at the Central Criminal Court to seven years' penal servitude and nine months' hard labor respectively for infamous blackmailing. The first of these two worthies left the dock cursing his prosecutor in the name of "the Almighty."

A fine old crusted story has just been imported from Ireland. A deputation of Shannon fishermen waited on the Director of the Arch-Confraternity at Limerick, and, having stated that the fishing season had been extremely bad, implored the priest to bless the river fishing, believing that his blessing would bring them a rich harvest. Father Tuimy and Father O'Flynn—the latter probably a relative of the gentleman in the song—accordingly went out in a boat and prayed for a more successful season. The result has been a wonderful lot of good catches, the fish being not only numerous, but large and of fine quality and flavor. Those two fishy Fathers ought to shift round to England. Their pious efforts would be of great assistance to many persons of delicate appetite just now, when fried sole is beyond the reach of all but millionaires.

Miss Jane Harrison, LL.D., lecturing at the Passmore Edwards Settlement on "Greek Ideas of Death," said that the Greeks had no sort of hope of a land where they would meet to part no more. They realised the beauty and joy of life, but in the face of death they saw only calm.

A testator left £1,500 to the University College of Wales for a scholarship on condition that the scholar should be neither a Unitarian nor a Roman Catholic. The college, being unsectarian, has had to decline the legacy, and the £1,500 falls into the residuary estate, which goes to a Congregational Chapel at Aberystwith, so that Unitarians and Roman Catholics won't profit by it after all. Unitarians, we presume, have too little Christianity, and Roman Catholics too much.

Now and then a clergyman tells the truth. The Rev. W. Statham, vicar of Holy Trinity, Southampton, in a recent sermon, said that "He had come across any number of men who believed that they believed the teaching of Christ, but he had never yet found a man, clergyman or layman, who did believe it." We have frequently made the same declaration, and we are pleased to find it corroborated by a parson.

On the 19th ult. the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railway ran the first Sunday local passenger trains out of New York since thirty years or longer, and it is understood that this will continue permanently. This act is charged against the new president of the road, Mr. W. H. Truesdale, late general manager of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railway, who is being held responsible by the parsons for this attempt to introduce Western customs into the East. It is pointed out by them that a few years ago the company provided a Bible for every passenger-car, and that they recently abolished slot-machines at their stations. The transition from Bibles to Sunday trains is considered to savor too much of backsliding even for a railroad company. We suspect, however, that the Company can square the matter by granting their clerical censors free transportation on both Sundays and other days in the week.—*Railway Herald*.

Mr. Longworth, a member of the Horwich District Council, has his own views of the Lord's omniscience. Speaking on the question of a new reservoir, he said that "Neither Mr. Tong nor God Almighty could tell whether that land was suitable for a reservoir without testing it by putting down trial holes."

An order has been issued at Bournemouth committing Bateman Perkins Wright, aged sixty-three, to Winchester Gaol for one month, for non-payment of an affiliation order obtained against him some weeks ago by his ex-servant, Mary Jane Astley. This Abrahamic gentleman has been deacon of a church at Stafford, president of the local Y.M.C.A., and always prominent in movements for the moral welfare of young people. He overlooked the fact that the Sarah and Hagar days are over and done with.

A Salvation Army "trophy" appeared the other day at Lambeth Police-court in the form of George Blackburn, who was charged with stealing a barrowload of sweets from James Lees. The "trophy" got three months' hard labor.

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes says that when he preaches on hell he usually chooses hymns on heaven "to preserve the balance of truth." No doubt he really means "to drown the smell of sulphur."

A pauper woman in Paris has been convicted of having her child baptized fourteen times as a Catholic and twelve times as a Protestant. She got five francs and a new dress each time. But if this is a crime, many converts who are vaunted by our missionaries ought to be in gaol.

The question of a memorial to Robert Owen came up on the Newtown Urban Council. The chairman spoke highly of Robert Owen's character and public services, and so did Messrs. Cooke and Powell; but Mr. David Owen made a rabid speech to the contrary. He said that Robert Owen labored for the bodies of men; he did nothing for their souls, nothing for Jesus Christ, and his memory should perish like his corpse in the churchyard. Fortunately this bigot stood alone. All the rest of the Council voted in favor of the Robert Owen memorial.

Mrs. K. E. Oates was married at Stirling on Good Friday. Soon afterwards her husband, who was of a very religious temperament, showed signs of suffering from strong religious mania. He thought God's wrath was upon him for marrying, and finally cut his throat with a carving-knife at Leeds. The poor fellow's married life only lasted eight days. His widow must have had enough religion for one lifetime.

Mr. Tom Mann has played many parts in his time. We remember hearing reports of him when he first went about the Tyneside, preaching Socialism and sneering at Bradlaugh. By-and-bye he came to the front in the Labor world, and in due course he was patted on the back by the "Socialist" parsons. Then the rumor was floated that he was going to take holy orders, and it appears that he really did entertain the idea, but he thought better of it, and saved himself from sinking into a white-choker. All the time, we understand, he had not a shred of belief in Christianity or any other form of religion. Now we see in the *Star* that he is going to run a public-house—the *Enterprise* at the corner of Long-acre and Endell-street. Mr. George Shipton, another Labor leader, and a far abler man than most of his successors in that line, ended up in the same way. He also became a publican. It isn't a very ideal occupation, but there is generally a living in it, which is not always a certainty when you serve His Majesty the People.

How amusing is the ordinary newspaper attitude towards Freethought. Any leading Freethinker who is right in the front of the war against Christianity may expect to be systematically ignored. He is simply treated as if he did not exist. Mum's the word on all occasions. But when he is dead, or very old and out of the fighting, they condescend to recognise his existence. They will even pay him compliments when he is no longer dangerous.

The London *Echo* the other evening contained a long puff of Mr. Bramwell Booth and his new social scheme, which is simply a copy of Lord Rowton's quiet, successful enterprise. This was immediately followed by several complimentary paragraphs on Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, who met the Rev. Dr. Guinness Rogers the preceding afternoon in the smoke-room of a West-end club. Had Mr. Holyoake met a leading Freethinker there—or elsewhere—there wouldn't have been a line about it; but he always gets well reported when he meets a leading Christian.

In the theological stage, when the Bible is accepted as the revelation of God's will, the pious man, when in doubt as to whether he is acting rightly or wrongly, quiets his misgivings by searching the Scripture until he finds a text which endorses his action. As such misgivings seldom arise except when the conscience revolts against the contemplated action, an appeal to Scripture to justify a point of conduct is generally found in practice to be an attempt to excuse a crime.—*G. Bernard Shaw*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

April 30, Bolton.
May 7 and 14, Athenæum Hall, London; 21, N.S.S. Conference, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

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

WE have received for the Miss Emma Bradlaugh Fund:—James Neate, 5s.; Mrs. Neate, 5s.

J. G. BARTRAM.—See "Sugar Plums."

S. HOLMAN.—See paragraph.

JOHN YOUNG.—Received. No, you don't intrude.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—Thanks. In our next.

JOSEPH CLOSE.—Mr. Foote will not be lecturing in the provinces again until after the Birmingham Conference. He will bear the Brandon invitation in mind and endeavor to pay you a visit. Will you jog his memory again in a month or so?

A. F. ELDERKIN.—Thanks for your enclosures. Rev. A. Bage's letter in reply to you is really beneath notice.

MISS EMMA BRADLAUGH FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—George Anderson, £1; S. Hartmann, 10s.; Mrs. B. E. Marks, 10s.; A. W. Marks, 10s.; Mr. Andrews, 10s.; W. Cody, 5s.; W. H. Harrap, 5s.; M. Christopher, 5s.; R. Griffiths, 2s.; H. Richardson, 2s.; A Friend, 1s. 6d.; A. J. Hooper, 1s.; T. Dobson, 1s.; S. B. S., 1s.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Dr. Nichols, Ilford, £1; Huddersfield Branch, 15s.

N.S.S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—East London Branch, 5s.; Chatham Branch, 12s. 6d.

N.S.S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—East London Branch, 5s.

T. K. HOLMES.—Thanks for the enclosures, but John Kensit's regular business is not worthy of much notice.

OLD FOLLOWER.—Life is not long enough for a public man to pay great attention to his traducers. We have been struck by the following passage from one of Swift's newly-published letters: "As to any Scurrilities published against me, I have no other remedy than to desire never to hear of them, and then the authors will be disappointed; at least it will be the same thing to me as if they had never been writ. For I will not imagine that any friend I esteem can value me the less upon the malice of fools and knaves, against whose republic I have always been at open war. Every man is safe from evil tongues, who can be content to be obscure, and men must take distinction as they do land, cum onere."

E. KITCHENER.—You don't understand what you are writing about. Secular education in Victoria has not caused an increase of crime. Clerical allegations to that effect have been refuted again and again, and refuted officially.

A. J. WALDRON.—Your letter is too late for insertion this week, but shall appear in our next.

JAS. ALEXANDER.—Pray accept our warmest thanks for your trouble in the matter.

L. ORGAN.—Your letters in the local press must be doing good.

T. DUNBAR.—Thanks for the hint.

P. SHAUGHNESSY.—We shall be happy to insert a notice of your work if it has the approval—as we dare say it has—of the Glasgow Society. Could you not ask Mr. Robertson, the secretary, to drop us a line? Meanwhile you have our good wishes.

JAMES NEATE.—Never mind the Christian brother. No doubt sufficient assistance will come from a better quarter. The Freethought party will probably see, as you say, that a lady bearing such a name and reputation shall not suffer distress. Please to hear of the success in Victoria Park. There is no need to thank us for the notice. We are only too glad to help all who are working for Freethought.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—London Morning—Progressive Thinker—Isle of Man Times—Southampton Times—Ethical World—Flaming Sword—New York Truthseeker—Liberator—Star—Horwich Chronicle—Sydney Bulletin—People's Newspaper—Der Arme Teufel—Freethought Magazine—Open Court—Freidenker—Blue Grass Blade—Free Society—El Libre Pensamiento—Crescent—Southend Observer—Boston Investigator—Secular Thought—Two Worlds—Montgomery Express—Freethought Ideal—Natal Mercury—Brann's Iconoclast—Public Opinion—North-Western Daily Gazette—Home Links—Freedom—Railway Herald.

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

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 28 Stonecutter-street by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

It being contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription expires, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.

LETTERS for the Editor of the Freethinker should be addressed to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE delivered three lectures to good audiences at Manchester on Sunday. The annual collection taken during the day for the N.S.S. Benevolent Fund realised about three pounds. We are glad to hear that the Manchester Branch is quite holding its own, although times are not exciting just now. Steady work goes on, and finances are in a fairly healthy condition. The Manchester Branch will of course be represented at the Birmingham Conference, and we hope its delegates will have the pleasure of meeting the representatives of many other Branches from all parts of the country.

Mr. Foote is having a Sunday off to-day (April 23), which he intends to spend in getting a little oxygen into his blood, instead of swallowing carbonic acid gas at a public meeting. Worms turn occasionally, and so does a Secular lecturer.

Mr. Charles Watts is home again from America. Unfortunately, the bad time he had over there has played havoc with him physically. His attack of influenza was extremely serious; indeed, he was given up by the doctors; but a good constitution pulled him through. The after effects have fallen chiefly upon his nerves, which are thoroughly disordered. It will be impossible for him to do any platform work for some time. He requires a good long rest and careful nursing.

No doubt the reader will think this is a strange Sugar Plum, being very much the reverse of sweet. We hasten to add, therefore, that our old friend and colleague is improving, and if he avoids the danger of a relapse he will doubtless be able to resume his platform work by-and-by with fresh vigor. He has arranged to attend the Birmingham Conference, which will not involve any great strain upon his strength.

Mr. Cohen occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (April 23), his subject being "The Benefits of Unbelief." No doubt he will have a good audience. Mr. Chilperic Edwards occupied this platform last Sunday evening, and delivered a very interesting and much appreciated lecture.

Mr. Cohen lectured in Victoria Park on Sunday afternoon to a large audience. His address, however, was abbreviated by the rain. Still, a good collection was taken for the N.S.S. General Fund. Mr. Cohen lectures there again this afternoon (April 23), at 3.15, and the collection will be on behalf of the Miss Emma Bradlaugh Fund.

Mr. A. B. Moss delivered three lectures on Sunday at Bolton. His evening audience was a good one and very enthusiastic. Mr. Moss has also been debating at Camberwell with Mr. Quelch on Malthusianism and Socialism. There was a large audience, and the debate was carried on with the utmost good temper. The meeting was very interested, and did not break up till nearly eleven o'clock.

Another Freethinker question, this time on the Watford Public Library Committee. Mr. Alexander having sent a copy of this journal, with a letter requesting its acceptance by the committee, a discussion arose upon the matter, in the course of which one of the members read an extract to the effect that "Nothing on earth can exceed the humbug of the clerical profession." The chairman, however, said there were none on the committee, so it didn't apply there. Finally, a vote was taken, and the Freethinker was accepted by six to four. The six included two Labor members. The four consisted of two Churchmen and two Baptists.

Delegates and visitors to the N.S.S. Conference on Whit Sunday are requested to communicate as soon as possible with Mr. J. Partridge, 65 Cato-street, Birmingham, stating what hotel accommodation they will require, or whether they prefer private lodgings.

Newcastle friends are requested to note that, owing to Mr. Joseph McCabe's lectures in the Co-operative Hall, Whitehall-road, Gateshead, on the 30th, the members' monthly meeting will be held a week earlier—to-day, the 23rd, at 1 Grainger-street. A good attendance is desired at 3 p.m.

Another meeting will be held to-day (April 23) at 102 Birchgrove, Porth, for the purpose of organising a Branch of the National Secular Society. All Freethinkers in the neighborhood are requested to attend.

We have just received the following letter from Melbourne: "Dear Foote,—I have for years been wondering if I should ever find an opportunity of paying a visit to England. I have at length made up my mind to visit you in about a year from date, if I can possibly raise the means and can get someone to supply my place here. If general business should improve, it would pay one of your younger men to visit Australia; but of this I can only speak doubtfully at present. I shall feel obliged if you can find room for this in the *Freethinker*. With best of good wishes to yourself, Mrs. Foote, and family, as also to all our friends, yours truly, JOS. SYMES."

Miss Emma Bradlaugh writes to Miss E. M. Vance thanking her and Mr. Foote for the effort that is being made on her behalf. She is gone for a time to a country cottage which has been offered her by an admirer of Charles Bradlaugh. We hope there will be a full and free flow of subscriptions during the next few weeks.

What an Infidel Did!

WALT WHITMAN, the great American poet, made his home for four years in a small attic in Washington, where he lived on the poorest fare, earning what he could as newspaper correspondent, and spending every spare moment in the soldiers' hospitals. See him enter the wards with cheerful face and hands full of flowers, laying them on the beds as he passes with a nod or a kind word. Every sad, wearied face brightens as he passes. He sits for hours by the wounded, writing letters for others, and receives farewell messages. Dying men pass away in his arms, soothed and comforted by his presence, when their need was sorest. Four years of this incessant hospital work broke his health, and he had a stroke of paralysis. This magnificent man had become a life-long invalid in the service of his suffering fellows. Truly his life was his most beautiful poem.

As Others Saw Him.

An Opponent's Opinion of our Great Leader.

"THE life of Bradlaugh shows that character and power are ten thousand times more to the people than mere opinion. Here was one who, as Browning has it, was 'ever a fighter'—strenuous, eager, unsparing, often bitter and hard; but he had, as was said of Byron, 'the imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength.'"—*Daily Chronicle* (Dec. 10, 1894).

The Value of Prayer.

When the giants of social force are advancing from the sombre shadow of the past, with the thunder and the hurricane in their hands, our poor prayers are of no more avail than the unbodied visions of a dream.—*Right Hon. John Morley, M.P.*

Heinrich Heine.

The spirit of the world
Beholding the absurdity of men—
Their vaunts, their feats—let a sardonic smile
For one short moment wander o'er his lips.
That smile was Heine!

—*Matthew Arnold, "Heine's Grave."*

Obituary.

I HAVE to report the death of an old Freethinker, Samuel Laycock, of Bright-street, Stanningley, near Leeds, who departed this life very suddenly on Monday night, the 10th inst., and was interred in the Baptist Burial Ground, Bramley, on the 13th inst. He was 76 years of age, having been born at Bradford in 1823. He leaves three grown-up daughters to mourn his loss. The usual Burial Service was read over him. He was a Radical in politics, a temperance reformer, a member of a small Branch of the N.S.S. at Stanningley, but not an active member. He was, and had been, a member of the Leeds Industrial Co-operative Society nearly from the beginning of that institution. He was for some time one of its directors. He took an active part at one time in education in this suburb of Leeds. We can fairly say he was a man who strove for liberty, progress, and the good of humanity in general.

H. SMITH.

Edward Fitzgerald.

"That same gentle spirit from whose pen
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow."
—*Spenser.*

EDWARD FITZGERALD, a great English poet, died in 1883 almost unknown. Only a few people had even heard his name. Indeed, the general public had very little chance of hearing it. He was so shy and retiring that he took more pains to avoid fame than others do to seek it. He wrote about remote subjects, which appealed only to cultured people. When his friend Tennyson dedicated "Tiresias" to Fitzgerald, the tribute seemed merely the outcome of friendship. The average reader discounted the praise of that

.....golden Eastern lay,
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well.

It is said that a man is known by his friends. If that be so, the world has small need of a formal introduction to Fitzgerald. He was a man of many and notable friendships. At school he made acquaintance with Spedding, the editor of Bacon, and at Cambridge with Thackeray. The years that followed united him to Alfred Tennyson, and his brother Frederick Tennyson, Carlyle, Bernard Barton the Quaker poet, Lawrence the painter, and others.

Fitzgerald's biographer, like the immortal knife-grinder, has no story to tell. Edward Fitzgerald was born at Bredfield, near Woodbridge, in 1809, the same year as Tennyson and Darwin. He was educated at Bury St. Edmunds, and afterwards at Cambridge. He followed no profession after taking his degree. Till 1853, though he often shifted his quarters, he lived mainly in a thatched cottage at Boulge, near Woodbridge, near his brother's residence, Boulge Hall. He was in lodgings in Woodbridge from 1860 to 1874, when he settled in a small house of his own outside of the town, named, at the wish of a lady friend, Little Grange. And "Laird of Little Grange," as he liked to sign himself, he remained till he died, aged seventy-four, in June, 1883. He is buried in Boulge Churchyard, and a rose, transplanted from the tomb of old Omar Khayyam, has been planted over his grave.

From this it will be seen that he lived the life of a recluse in Suffolk on the North Sea coast. His friend Carlyle saw in it all only a "peaceable, affectionate, ultra-modest man," and an "innocent, *far niente* life." Like Shelley, he had a great fondness for the sea, and a great affection for fishermen and sailors. One old viking, the hero-fisherman of Lowestoft, whom we know as "Posh," he numbered among his personal friends. The viking succumbed eventually to an undue devotion to Bacchus, but that did not trouble Fitzgerald, for he was no harsh judge of human frailties. Singularly enough, the man who gave us Omar's *Rubaiyat*, that immortal rhapsody of wine, women, and song, was very abstemious. He was a vegetarian, and he once nearly killed his friend Tennyson by persuading him, too, to turn vegetarian for some six weeks.

The little Fitzgerald wrote was all published anonymously, except *Six Dramas of Calderon*, in 1853. And, curiously, the new popular edition of his incomparable poem, by a publisher's error, has no mention of his name on the title-page. He wrote a memoir in an edition of the poems of his friend, Bernard Barton, in 1849. Two years later he printed his remarkable dialogue, *Euphranor*. *Polonius* appeared in 1852, a rendering of the *Agamemnon* was published in 1876, and four editions of his immortal version of *Omar Khayyam* came out before his death, the first appearing in 1859, the year of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Other works appeared in Mr. Aldis Wright's edition of his *Literary Remains* (1889).

We have spoken of Fitzgerald's friendships. The companion of such giants must have been no ordinary man. Nor would it be possible to keep on writing uninteresting letters to such men for nearly half a century. Fitzgerald's letters, then, we take for granted, are not dull. In fact, they are among the best in the language. He was truly a delightful correspondent, and his letters are charming and very piquant reading on account of their heterodoxy. His taste was all for

old books and old friends, familiar jokes and familiar places. His special literary favorites were Cervantes and Scott, and Montaigne and Madame de Sevigné, she herself a lover of Montaigne, and with a spice of his free thought and speech in her. Of course he loved Omar Khayyam, who made his fame, and that other old-world Freethinker, Lucretius. He hated London for many things, but chiefly for hiding nature. Like Thoreau, he knew by instinct the life that suited him, and had the wisdom to refuse to be turned aside from it. If any justification were needed, his version of Omar's wonderful *Rose of the Hundred and One* would be enough. The perennial charm of that immortal poem is, that it voices with no uncertain sound the scepticism at the bottom of all thoughtful men's minds, and makes magnificent music of it. In his version of *Omar Khayyam*, this shy dreamer of dreams dreamed one dream more lasting than we ourselves, or he, or the very Suffolk coast he lived on. Under the spell of the poet we, who grub among the muck-heaps of the world, may enter the magic realm of poesy. He gives all who care to read the freedom of that ancient Eastern city of dreams, which far transcends in mystery and splendor the Orient men go out in the ships to see.

Oh, immortals of literature! The old Persian poet sees his vision and his dream, and writes it, and eight centuries hence the tired merchant, forgetting for a little space his counting-house and ledgers, lives a freer life in the wonderland of your genius. Here are nymphs and roses, grotesque imaginings and human memories. This is immortality, indeed! Under thy opiate wand he dreams your dream for one little hour—and is refreshed.

MIMNERMUS.

Richard Carlile.

(Continued from page 252.)

"Though the freedom of the press," says Mr. Holyoake, "was accomplished in 1829, something more remained to be accomplished, which was the freedom of public oral discussion; and on this subject Carlile set his thought. When Mr. Taylor was prosecuted and imprisoned, in 1828, Carlile was called into action in his new character. He immediately converted a large room in his house, 62 Fleet-street, into a Sunday-school of Free Discussion, and introduced a public debate on all useful and political subjects on the Sabbath Day. This had not been done before by anyone anywhere. By a subscription he got Mr. Taylor well supported in prison, and on his liberation accompanied him to Cambridge, as an Infidel missionary, to challenge the University to public discussion. They passed from Cambridge to Liverpool, presenting a printed circular of public challenge to every priest on the road. Only one accepted it, the Rev. David Thom, of Liverpool, who quailed at the very onset and withdrew. This was done in 1829. In 1830 he sought a larger sphere of action for public meetings than his own dwelling house, and engaged a series of buildings and theatres called the Rotunda, in Blackfriars-road. Soon after he gained possession of this building the second French Revolution broke out, which gave a new impetus to political feeling in London. Giving to every man liberty of all the public men of note out of Parliament; and the speech in his theatres, the Rotunda was attended by that the Government took alarm, and the prophecy of the day was that the Rotunda would cause a Revolution in England. While the Tories remained in office they did not molest him [probably they were sick of former fruitless attempts], but the Whigs no sooner took office than they very foully made war on him, and caused him thirty-two months' imprisonment in the Compter of the City of London. The Rev. Robert Taylor [author of the *Diagnosis and Devil's Pulpit*] was also prosecuted under the Whig Administration, and filled out two years in Horse-monger Lane Gaol, for his preaching in the Rotunda."

Those were the days of Church and State tyranny, and Carlile was destined to feel the claws of the ecclesiastical part of that bifold monster. In 1834 and 1835

he passed ten weeks more in the Compter for refusing to pay Church Rates assessed upon his house in Fleet-street. When his goods were seized he retaliated by putting into his window two effigies—one of a bishop, and the other of a distraining officer. Subsequently the trinity was completed by the addition of a devil, who was jovially linked arm-in-arm with the bishop. This curious sight naturally attracted the attention of large crowds, which led to Carlile's being indicted as a nuisance. He was sentenced to pay a fine of 40s. to the King, and give sureties in £200 (himself in £100, and two others in £50 each) for good behavior for three years. He refused, however, to involve anyone in his troubles; no security would he give, neither would he truckle to the minions of power. "They have sentenced me," said he, "to three years' imprisonment. So much for their leniency! It is a mockery to say that I may, if I please, purchase my liberty. I cannot do it. I shall have more liberty in prison than in walking the streets at the discretion of one set of men, and at the hazard of £100 penalty to two others. It is a case in which I will not interfere to abate one hour of my imprisonment. When the gates are open to me I will walk out, but I will not pay or do anything to procure release." Carlile's total of imprisonment amounted to nine years and four months.

Carlile had always been Republican; even at the outset of his career, when traversing London to find customers for the *Black Dwarf*, he had disliked Cobbett's *Register* because "it did not go far enough." Before his imprisonment he had identified himself with the extreme party of reformers. He was present at the Manchester Massacre (Peterloo), and narrowly escaped being captured. The ignorance of his person on the part of the soldiers and police secured his safety. He was threatened with dangers from other quarters also. Edwards, the Government spy, the main instrument in hatching the Cato-street conspiracy, attempted to inveigle him into secret illegal practices, which, however, his native good sense rejected. Edwards took a shop next door to Carlile, where William Hone had published his famous *Parodies*, and under various pretences courted Carlile's society. He talked to him about meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury in Windsor Castle, as a modeller, and undertook for him a bust of Paine. Speaking of this, Carlile says: "I revere the name of Thomas Paine; the image of his honest countenance is constantly before me. I have him in bust in whole length figure; for which I have to thank the late Government of Liverpool, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth, who appointed Edwards the spy to this task—he who, when he failed to get me hanged, caused the death of Thistlewood and others." Secret practices had no attraction for Carlile; he preferred to do everything openly in the light of day. Not, indeed, that there was any tincture of timidity in his composition; no more resolute, intrepid man ever breathed. When other reformers shrank back he always pushed forward. Said he: "Timidity may be seen sitting on the countenance of almost every politician. He speaks and speculates with a trembling which generates a prejudice in others. As it is the slave who makes the tyrant, so it is timidity in the politician which creates the prejudice of the persecutor." Even a resort to physical force he would have approved and assisted in, if no other method of remedying abuses had been possible, although he never did see reason to sanction any particular act of violence. "In the beginning of my political career," he wrote, "I had those common notions which the enthusiasm of youth and inexperience produces, that all reforms must be the work of physical force. The heat of my imagination showed me everything about to be done at once. I am now enthusiastic, but it is in *working* where I can work *practically* rather than theoretically; and though I would be the last to oppose a well-applied physical force, in bringing about reforms or revolutions, I would be the last in advising others to rush into useless dangers that I would shun, or where I would not lead. I have long formed the idea that an insurrection against grievances in this country must, to be successful, be spontaneous and not plotted, and that all political conspiracies may be local and even individual evils. I challenge the omniscience of the Home Office to say whether I have ever countenanced anything of the kind in word or

deed. I will do nothing in a political point of view which cannot be done openly." These surely are wise words, and evince that Carlyle had learnt a lesson of political wisdom a whole generation before many more ardent but less sagacious reformers.

Carlyle's Republicanism was of a purely practical type. "Liberty," said he, "is the property of man: a Republic only can protect it"; and on behalf of that Republic he ever faithfully labored. Even against the powerful disparagement of William Cobbett he boldly championed it. Yet he would never listen to Socialistic schemes, no matter by whom propounded. "Equality," said he, "means not an equality of *riches*, but of *rights* merely." He once discussed Socialism with Mr. Lloyd Jones, and, as might be expected, treated it as chimerical in the present stage of human progress, and probably of but little advantage in any.

As an editor Carlyle was industrious and indefatigable. His literary ability was never transcendent, but he wrote nervous terse English, and always showed a thorough knowledge of his subject. Thomas Paine was his model; for Paine's practical spirit much resembled his own. But he depreciated other writers with unjustifiable severity: their impassioned prose seemed to him flighty, because he was not a man of passionate nature. Of Milton he wrote with graceless asperity, apparently forgetting that it was nothing wonderful that the great Republican should be ignorant of political reforms deemed advisable by people who had the advantage of living nearly two centuries later. Milton's noble *Areopagitica* will be read and admired, and his name revered, when much of Richard Carlyle's writings will be utterly forgotten.

Carlyle's deficient education was at first a deplorable detraction from his editorial efficiency, but he gradually remedied the defect by dint of assiduous self-culture. During his long imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol he continued to edit the *Republican* with increasing success. The circulation reached as high as 15,000; and in all fourteen volumes were issued. After its discontinuance he edited other religious periodicals, the *Lion* and the *Christian Warrior*; and each of them with ability and success.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

The Glories of this Century.

(Concluded from page 251.)

"WE have had some poets ourselves. Emerson wrote many poetic and philosophic lines. He never violated any rule. He kept his passions under control, and generally 'kept off the grass.' But he uttered some great and splendid truths, and sowed countless seeds of suggestion. When we remember that he came of a line of New England preachers, we are amazed at the breadth, the depth, and the freedom of his thought.

"Walt Whitman wrote a few great poems, elemental, natural—poems that seem to be a part of nature, ample as the sky, having the rhythm of the tides, the swing of a planet.

"Whitcomb Riley has written poems of hearth and home, of love and labor, worthy of Robert Burns. He is the sweetest, strongest singer in our country, and I do not know his equal in any land.

"But when we compare the literature of the first half of this century with that of the last, we are compelled to say that the last, taken as a whole, is best. Think of the volumes that science has given to the world! In the first half of this century sermons—orthodox sermons—were published and read. Now, reading sermons is one of the lost habits. Taken as a whole, the literature of the latter part of our century is better than the first. I like the essays of Professor Clifford. They are so clear, so logical, that they are poetic. Herbert Spencer is not simply instructive—he is charming. He is full of true imagination. He is not the slave of imagination. Imagination is his servant. Huxley wrote like a trained swordsman. His thrusts were never parried. He had superb courage. He never apologised for having an opinion. There was never on his soul the stain of evasion. He was as candid as the truth. Haeckel is a great writer because he reveres a fact, and would

not for his life deny or misinterpret one. He tells what he knows with the candor of a child, and defends his conclusions like a scientist, a philosopher. He stands next to Darwin.

"Coming back to fiction and poetry, I have great admiration for Edgar Fawcett. There is in his poetry thought, beauty, and philosophy. He has the courage of his thought. He knows our language, the energy of verbs, the color of adjectives. He is in the highest sense an artist. I think Kipling is a man of real genius. He has the freedom of winds and waves, and he knows the heart of man."

Colonel Ingersoll is inclined to make merry over Mr. Caine's wooing of the clergy by means of the sock and buskin. He was asked:—

"What do you think of Hall Caine's recent efforts to bring about a closer union between the stage and the pulpit?"

"Of course," said Colonel Ingersoll, "I am not certain as to the intentions of Mr. Caine. I saw *The Christian*, and it did not seem to me that the author was trying to catch the clergy. There is certainly nothing in the play calculated to please the pulpit. There is a clergyman who is pious and heartless. John Storm is the only Christian, and he is crazy. When Glory accepts him at last, you not only feel, but you know, that she has acted the fool. The lord in the piece is a dog, and the real gentleman is the chap that runs the music-hall. How the play can please the pulpit I do not see. Storm's whole career is a failure. His followers turn on him like wild beasts. His religion is a divine and diabolical dream. With him murder is one of the means of salvation. Mr. Caine has struck Christianity a stinging blow between the eyes. He has put two preachers on the stage, one a heartless hypocrite and the other a madman. Certainly I am not prejudiced in favor of Christianity, and yet I enjoyed the play. If Mr. Caine says he is trying to bring the stage and the pulpit together, then he is a humorist, with the humor of Rabelais."

"What do recent exhibitions in this city of scenes from the life of Christ indicate with regard to the tendencies of modern art?"

"Nothing. Some artists love the sombre, the melancholy, the hopeless. They enjoy painting the bowed form, the tear-filled eyes. To them grief is a festival. There are people who find pleasure in funerals. They love to watch the mourners. The falling clouds make music. They love the silence, the heavy odors, the sorrowful hymns, and the preacher's remarks. The feelings of such people do not indicate the general trend of the human mind. Even a poor artist may hope for success if he represents something in which many millions are deeply interested, around which their emotions cling like vines. A man need not be an orator to make a patriotic speech, a speech that flatters his audience. So an artist need not be great in order to satisfy, if his subject appeals to the prejudice of those who look at his pictures.

"I have never seen a good painting of Christ. All the Christs that I have seen lack strength and character. They look weak and despairing. They are all unhealthy. They have the attitude of apology, the sickly smile of non-resistance. I have never seen a heroic, serene, and triumphant Christ. To tell the truth, I never saw a great religious picture. They lack sincerity. All the angels look almost idiotic. In their eyes is no thought, only the innocence of ignorance.

"I think that art is leaving the celestial, the angelic, and is getting in love with the natural, the human. Troyon put more genius in the representation of cattle than Angelo and Raphael did in angels. No picture has been painted of heaven that is as beautiful as a landscape by Corot. The aim of art is to represent the realities, the highest and noblest, the most beautiful. The Greeks did not try to make men like gods, but they made gods like men. So the great artists of our day go to nature."

"Is it not strange that, with one exception, the most notable operas written since Wagner are by Italian composers instead of German?"

"For many years German musicians insisted that Wagner was not a composer. They declared that he produced only a succession of discordant noises."

account for this by the fact that the music was not German. His countrymen could not understand it. They had to be educated. There was no orchestra in Germany that could really play *Tristan and Isolde*. Its eloquence, its pathos, its shoreless passion, were beyond them. There is no reason to suppose that Germany is to produce another Wagner. Is England expected to give us another Shakespeare?"

—*Truthseeker* (New York). R. G. INGERSOLL.

Brother Jones's Performance.

It may be as well to state at once that Ebenezer Jones is not in love. If it takes two to make a love-match, those familiar with Ebenezer will not wonder at this, for his peculiar physiognomy is enough to damp the ardor of any amorous maid, and to cause her rather to sigh for the seclusion of a convent than for the bliss of matrimony. Yet, if anyone can inform Jones of a place that is a thousand miles away from anywhere else, he will receive Ebenezer's eternal gratitude and undying affection by return post. This is why. Brother Ebenezer is a most respectable grocer, and the rapid way in which he has grown fat and prosperous, whilst his rivals have stayed lean and hard-up, has made him the wonder and envy of his fellow-tradesmen. Some of his ways may be rather singular, and there is certainly a rumor that his fresh butter is composed of yellow ochre and fat bacon, though there is no evidence (barring the taste) to support this. Jones is—or rather was—also a leading light at Brother Bumble's chapel, and when at last the debt attached to the meeting-house was wiped out, they decided to hold an entertainment to celebrate the event. Now, Brother Ebenezer is a staid and sober individual, who never likes to display himself or indulge in senseless frivolities, which are alike harmful to the mind and injurious to the soul; yet, in response to Bumble's repeated solicitations, he consented to contribute a conjuring performance. The fateful day at length arrived, and, after Bumble had opened the proceedings with a long prayer, Brother Snoop gave us a recitation; then a Sister followed with "I'm to be Queen of the May," and another Brother obliged with a song. Then Bumble announced that Brother Jones had very kindly consented to perform a few sleight-of-hand tricks. Instantly Jones was seized with a trembling fit; but, staggering to his feet, and smoothing down his hair, he made his way to the platform, whence he bowed in reply to the deafening applause which greeted the chairman's announcement. After seeing that his book on conjuring was near by, he began a neat little speech which he had taken some pains to prepare—at least, the prepared speech was neat enough, though the speech he gave was something like this: "Gentlemen and—er—Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen! Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, I am unaccustomed to public speaking—er—as I said before!"

During the uproarious clapping of hands and stamping of feet which followed this short oration, Ebenezer arranged two egg-cups on the table, and, opening his conjuring-book at page 65, he requested the services of an assistant. Brother Bumble jumped upon the platform, and Ebenezer, after reading the directions of his book, borrowed his assistant's handkerchief. This he saturated in some paraffin he had brought, placed it in one of the egg-cups, which he gave to Bumble to hold, and, striking a match, had the pleasure of beholding his pastor's piece of cambric speedily reduced to ashes.

Then, whilst the audience were spellbound and wonder-struck, and Bumble was growing purple in the face, the amateur conjurer consulted his *Complete Guide* once more. Oh, my gentle and confiding reader, imagine his feelings when he read: "Substitute an old rag for the handkerchief, dip it in paraffin, place it in the egg-cup, and set it alight." The gibbering faces in the front row swam before his eyes, and in the region of his stomach he experienced a sensation as of cold potatoes. He was about to smile a kindly smile, and bid rejoice no more, when an idea—prompted by the devil, who is always seeking whom he may devour—occurred to him. Bumble, he knew, invariably carried two handkerchiefs; therefore, he doubtless still had one in his coat-tails pocket. If the wretched Ebenezer could secure this, and, unseen, place it in the other egg-cup, all would yet be well. Armed with this thought, the deluded grocer hit upon a scheme which he vainly thought would save him from degradation.

He placed himself directly behind Bumble, and sternly commanded the audience to watch the ashes which showed above the cup, and which Jones—under the influence of Satan, that father of all falsehoods—said "would be seen to gradually disappear, and, when gone, the handkerchief, hurt and neatly folded, would be seen in the other cup." Having diverted the attention of his audience, Ebenezer stealthily placed his hand in the pocket of his unsuspecting pastor. He almost jumped for joy when he realised that his

surmise was correct; but, concealing his emotion, he firmly grasped a portion of Bumble's extra handkerchief. Then, pretending to be only giving a magic wave of his hand, and shouting loudly "Presto! Presto!" he gave the kerchief a sharp jerk. My clever and accomplished reader, have you ever beheld the expression of the dying miser, as he realises that he and his beloved money must part at last; or the murderer, as he hears his judge pronounce the last dread sentence of the law; or the newspaper editor when he receives an unstamped "Ode to Spring"? All these and a thousand others were mingled in the expression of brother Ebenezer, when, as the handkerchief came out, a piece of twist tobacco rolled upon the platform, and a bottle containing some liquid refreshment broke as it fell upon the floor. It would be impossible to describe the feelings of the unfortunate Jones as Bumble suddenly wheeled round and gave him a left-hander on the nose, and kicked him off the stage; neither could anyone imagine how the audience stamped and roared and laughed and screamed and whistled, until brother Snoop turned off the gas and dispersed the meeting. The language of Bumble is altogether beyond reporting; and the only thing that remains to be said is, that if anyone can inform Jones of a place that is a thousand miles from anywhere else, where he can rest his weary head and collect his scattered thoughts, his information will be paid for by Ebenezer's eternal gratitude and undying affection—as I said before.

ERN. T. COOMBE.

Correspondence.

RE MR. GOULD'S FUNERAL SERVICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Had I been a promiscuous listener to Mr. Gould's funeral service, on April 1, at Leicester, as reported by that gentleman himself in the *Freethinker* of April 9, I had certainly found it very, very hard to realise that I was listening to a Secular burial service. Your respected contributor, putting his discourse forward as a model, seems to me to court criticism. I therefore hope he will take mine in good part.

In two short sentences we have the word "soul" thrice repeated, and the word "grace" once. In paragraph 1 we have spirit so referred to as to leave it open for any Christian to claim that it is used in a religious sense. Ditto of the "material form of the child." Then, again, we have "the religion which consists in doing good." "Sanctified," "holy," "salvation." In a word, Sir, we have in this short discourse as many vocal symbols of the widespread superstition that Secularism seeks to uproot as would set up in trade any revivalist preacher. Now, sir, if Mr. Gould uses these sacerdotal terms in their etymological signification as distinguished from their ordinary acceptance by the religious world, I suggest that the language of fairly educated people will supply him, or others, with far more appropriate means of expressing themselves on so impressive an occasion as a Secularist interment, the main idea of which is that all such sacerdotalisms, to the Secularists present, are simply meaningless jargon.

Our religion, as by law established, teaches that good works apart from faith in Christ are evil. I know of no Secularist that either knows, or believes in, any religion that "consists in doing good." We all know that Thomas Paine defined his religion as doing good; but we also know that the good works for which we honor his memory had no more to do with his religion than with his clothes.

To my mind, such words and phrases are as much out of place in a Secular funeral service as they are when they appear in the ordinary conversation of those good people who are supposed to have ceased to be influenced by them—that is to say, the people who call themselves Secularists.

T. J. THURLOW.

It was a Catholic bishop who told this joke on himself: "I was suddenly called," he said, "from my home to see an unfortunate sailor who had been cast ashore from a wreck, and was lying speechless upon the ground, but not quite dead. 'The life's in him still, your reverence; he stirred a little.' So I stooped down and said to him: 'My poor man, you're nearly gone; but just try to say one little word, or make one little sign to show that you are dying in the true faith.' So he opened one of his eyes just a wee bit, and said: 'Bloody end to the Pope!' and so he died."

"I suffered agonies," said the Bishop of Johnsminster, the other day, "in having to suppress my laughter. We were assembled to consecrate a church, and in the procession was the Banner of St. Mark's Schools. There was a lion—a very fierce-looking one—with terrible claws and teeth, and underneath was the legend: 'Suffer little children to come unto me.'"

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Benefits of Unbelief."

BATTERSEA BRANCH: Meetings every Monday at 8.30, at 8 Atherton-street, Battersea.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, A Concert. April 26, at 8, Second Annual Complimentary Concert and Dance.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 16 New Church-road): Every Saturday, at 7, Debating Class. Sunday, at 7.30, W. Heaford, "Miracles and Medicine."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bow Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, H. H. Quilter, "John Wesley."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 7, Stanton Coit, "The Personality of Christ."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11, Stanton Coit, "Nietzsche and Self-deification."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, E. Pack.

BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): 3.15, R. P. Edwards, "The Teachings of Jesus."

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "What would Jesus Do?"

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "The Drama of Christianity."

FINSBURY PARK (near Bandstand): 3.15, A lecture.

HAMPSTEAD HEATH (near Flagstaff): 3.15, Mr. Easton.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. C. Davis; 3.30, Mr. Pepperno, "Did Moses Write the Pentateuch?"

KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7, W. Ramsey.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford.

THE TRIANGLE (Salmon Lane, Limehouse): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 11.30, A lecture.

S. L. E. S. (Peckham Rye): Mr. Newland.

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

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, E. White, "God is Love: Is it True?"

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner—11, "The Gallows and the Lash"; 7, "The Queen's Reign of Peace."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Miss Zona Vallance, "The Right Solution of the Religious Controversy in Education."

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Arms Hall): 6.30, A. Paul, "Atheism."

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. Strathearn; 6.30, Social Meeting.

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row). Thursdays, at 8.30, Elocution Class. Sunday, at 7, A lecture.

HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, No. 2 Room): 7, Peter Miller, "What has the Christian Church Done for the Blind?"

LEICESTER SECULAR CLUB (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, A lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): For lecture see *Liverpool Daily Post* of Saturday next.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): R. Forder—3, "The Bible and Ancient Monuments"; 7, "History and the Gospels: Do they Agree?" Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday evening—Vocal and instrumental music, recitations, etc.

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

WEST STANLEY (Co-operative Hall): 8, J. McCabe, "The Meaning of the Catholic Revival." April 24, at 7.30, in the Board Schools, J. McCabe, "From Rome to Rationalism."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—April 23, a., Victoria Park; e., Athenæum, Tottenham Court-road; 30, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., Athenæum. May 3, Mile End Waste; 7 and 14, Manchester; 21, Birmingham Conference.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—April 23, e., Edmonton. May 7, m., Clerkenwell, a., Victoria Park; 14, a. and e., Brockwell Park; 21, m., Mile End; e., Victoria Park; e., Stratford. 28, a., Hampstead Heath. June 4, m., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith; 18, a. and e., Brockwell Park; 25, m., Battersea.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—May 7, Birmingham.

R. P. EDWARDS, 52 Bramley-road, Notting-hill.—April 23, m., Station-road; a., Brockwell Park; 30, m., Pimlico. May 7, m., Hyde Park; a., Hampstead Heath; e., Hammersmith; 14, m., Ridley-road; a. and e., Peckham Rye; 21, m., Limehouse; e., Mile End; 28, m., Pimlico; e., Edmonton.

E. PACK, 10 Henstridge-place, Ordnance-road, St. John's Wood.—April 23, m., Battersea Park; a., Regent's Park; 30, m., Limehouse; a., Regent's Park. May 7, m., Mile End; e., Edmonton; 14, m., Hyde Park; a., Hampstead Heath; e., Kilburn; 21, m., Station-road, Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park; e., Peckham Rye; 28, m., Battersea Park; a., Regent's Park.

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