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The Rev. Annabel Lee.

(Concluded from page 258.)

BUT let us return to Mr. Buchanan's ideal society of the twenty-first century. We are told that "cheerfulness and contentedness reigned supreme," but this is evidently an exaggeration, for we are afterwards told that "a certain vague monotony characterised the movements of civilisation." The lottery of life contained all prizes and no blanks. There was no striving, no delight of expectation. "And the world lacked Mystery"—which was the most grievous want of all. The idea of God was banished, and with it the doctrine of a future life. In the old evil days of darkness and suffering there had been compensations. However wretched men were, they could dream of a happy hereafter. "The Gates of Heaven had been still left open," Mr. Buchanan says, "giving glimpses of other worlds and higher hopes and fears." Nothing is said about the Gates of Hell. Mentioning them would spoil the partisan picture and discount the argument with which it is connected.

With regard to the lack of mystery, it appears to us that Mr. Buchanan is the victim of his own imagination—or shall we say the want of it? Mystical temperaments would always find scope even under the most scientific civilisation. However much man may discover, there will always be the region of the unknown, for he can never grasp the infinite. Let him travel as far as he will, he will ever be bounded by an horizon; and those who like dreaming about the beyond will always be able to gratify their inclinations. It is impossible to prove that there is no God, however easy it is to disprove the existence of the ordinary God of Theism, with his attributes of infinite wisdom, infinite love, and infinite power, which are contradicted by the plainest facts of science, history, and experience. In the same way, although the belief in a future life, at the very best, is no more than a guess and a hope, it is impossible to prove that there is *no* future life. And this impossibility of proving a universal negative will always afford room for those in whom the imaginative faculty disdains an alliance with the scientific intelligence.

Mr. Buchanan really errs, as we think, from want of imagination. He does not put himself in the place of those who hold opposite principles to his own. He looks at their prospect from his own point of view. He does not realise that our emotions adjust themselves to our ideas. When our ideas change we sometimes experience an emotional wrench, but in time our feelings gather in fresh order around the new conception. It is narrowness on the part of Theists to fancy that Atheists are unhappy, and similar narrowness on the part of those who believe in a future life to imagine that those who do not believe in it are miserable. What we recognise as impossible we cease to desire. Peasants do not pine for the love of earls' daughters—not, at least, in the world of reality, whatever they may do in the world of fiction. They love and marry elsewhere, without being pained by their limitations. And those who abandon belief in God generally find the ideal of Humanity an adequate one, while those who abandon the belief in a future life usually find their life in this world sufficient, particularly when it is intensified and ennobled by a consciousness of the practically infinite life of the race.

Such considerations as these are apparently foreign to the mind of Mr. Buchanan. Certainly they are

foreign to the mind of his heroine. She thinks that the fact of death makes this life of no real importance in itself. She therefore preaches the doctrine of a future life as she finds it, or thinks she finds it, in the teachings of Jesus Christ. And her preaching stirs the hearts of many of her hearers. "Romance," as Mr. Buchanan naively remarks, "was not dead in the world; it had only been sleeping, and the voice of the dead Christ, sounding again from the portals of the grave, was awakening it at last." We are glad to note that Christianity—even the Christianity of Mr. Buchanan—appeals to the passion for romance. It seems pretty certain that most of the New Testament life of Jesus Christ is constructed on that assumption. The amount of history in it is remarkably small; in fact, almost, if not quite, infinitesimal. Nothing could well be more romantic than the legends of the Apostles, unless it be the later legends which pass current as ecclesiastical history. Romance has indeed been magnificently catered for throughout the whole Christian era. We are not surprised that those who have fed upon it find the sober teachings of science insipid, and regard as cold and gloomy the chastened hopes of the evolutionist.

Driven on by a kind of unconscious logic, Mr. Buchanan relates that the preaching of the Rev. Annabel Lee rekindled the fading embers of the ancient superstition. One woman had an epileptic seizure, and a man shrieked out and died. Her mission carried with it "terror and confusion." Some fanatics of the revived faith wrecked one of the Temples of Humanity. "Men were clamoring," we are told, "that the reign of Humanity was over, and even that the Day of Judgment was close at hand!" We do not recollect such a convulsion since Jonah preached to the city of Nineveh.

But without dwelling too much on this unfortunate aspect of the revival of Christianity, let us examine the essence of the Rev. Annabel Lee's preaching, for that is presumably what Mr. Buchanan regards as of transcendent importance.

In an early part of the story, when the heroine is first in revolt against the cruel Religion of Humanity, with its callous preference for a strong and healthy instead of a weak and pathological race of human beings, she is the subject of an entertaining conversation between Eustace Combermere and Auberon Shelley Espinosa, chief of the Department of Ethical Investigation, Arch-doctor of Physics, and Professor of Practical Causation. This venerable Humanitarian, nearly a hundred years old, but still bright and active, speaks as follows concerning "the antique Jesus":—

"The beautiful, bewildered Dreamer who perished ages ago, leaving his name as an eternal and imperishable legacy to all posterity. Well, do not we, too, honor the man Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Dreamers? Is not his picture with those of the other great pioneers to be seen in our Pantheon? Is not his supreme maxim, 'Love one another!' written in letters of gold on our Altars of Humanity?..... He saw, no one ever saw so clearly, the evils of Egoism, War, Wealth-hunting, and all other forms of competition. Unfortunately, the remedy he suggested, a belief in another life which would redress the miseries of this, was unscientific, and led to endless waste of time; but it was an age of superstitions, and he could not escape his environment."

Considering the hospitality thus extended to the "King of Dreamers" by a Religion so alien to the greater part of his teaching, one is surprised at the vehemence of the woman preacher's denunciations, until one reflects that it was ever thus, and will probably ever be so. Supernatural religion is naturally intolerant. Its motto is "All or nothing." Whoever is not for it is

against it. Like a character in Tennyson, it says, "Love me all in all, or not at all." This, indeed, explains the tremendous animosity of sect against sect, and the rancorous malignity always displayed towards "heretics"—that is, persons who only differ in some respect from the orthodox faith.

Mr. Buchanan, however, is probably wrong in imagining that the Religion of Humanity would be quite so hospitable to his "King of Dreamers." Many persons have been astonished that Comte found no place for Jesus in his catholic Calendar, while assigning an honorable position to Paul. In one of Comte's letters, indeed, he refers to Jesus as "that charlatan." We need not stop to inquire into the justice of this description. It is enough to say that the precepts of Jesus are generally vague and visionary, and that the really practical ethics of the New Testament are to be found in the epistles of Paul. Moreover, as Jesus has been deified, his place is in the Pantheon, not in the Historical Gallery. He who becomes a god loses for ever his manhood. And just as a dethroned king cannot become a citizen, so a dethroned god cannot occupy a position in the Calendar of Great Men. This may be a misfortune as far as Jesus is concerned, but he has only his worshippers to thank for it, and it is now beyond remedy.

However this may be, let us take the Annabel Lee-Buchanan gospel of Christ for what it is worth. Here it is as set forth by the woman preacher:—

"Ask yourselves *what* Jesus believed. His beliefs, from the point of view of our perfect Humanity, were both mad and monstrous!

"That poverty was better than wealth or comfort; that sickness was better than health; that no thought whatever should be taken for the morrow, or for food or raiment or dwelling; that disease of all kinds could be healed in a moment by faith, by the inspired word, the lifted hand; that the dead man could slip his shroud and arise; that this world was merely the prelude to another in Heaven.....It was against your God, the God of Strength and Happiness, that the great Revolver of the Christians rose, affirming instead, and proclaiming in his own person, another God—the God of Failure, Weakness, Pain, and Sorrow.....Jesus said that the Weak should inherit the earth; we, the strong, inherit it..... Jesus bade us take no thought for the morrow; we take endless thought of it, that our children's children may be even more perfect than ourselves. Jesus despised this life—we respect it and cling to it as the only life the individual soul can ever know. If we are wise, Jesus was foolish. If Jesus was right, we are hopelessly lost and wrong."

We are prepared to endorse every clause of this tirade. If Jesus was right, Civilisation is hopelessly wrong; and if Civilisation is right, Jesus was hopelessly wrong. Mr. Buchanan deserves our thanks for his forcible statement of this "hopeless" contradiction.

The civilised world will never run after poverty again, never love sickness, never cease taking thought for the morrow, never accept faith as a substitute for medical science. On the contrary, we already see professed Christian judges sending Peculiar People to prison for trusting in the efficacy of prayer, and neglecting to call in a doctor to their sick children. And the civilised world is growing more and more suspicious of the theory that the miseries of this life are to be compensated for in the sweet by-and-by: All this seems to prove, as Mr. Buchanan puts it, that Jesus was foolish; or, as we should put it, that he belonged to an ignorant and superstitious past.

Jesus indeed taught that this life was but the prelude to another. It is true that he "despised this life"—true that "we respect it and cling to it." This is the historical and essential antithesis between Christianity and Civilisation.

We are not quite certain, however, that Mr. Buchanan is himself in love with poverty, sickness, and weakness, or that he intends to patronise the faith-healer instead of the qualified physician. It may be, as we have already hinted, that he is only exploiting a temporary vogue, and working a claim of his own in the "Christian" goldfield which has yielded so much valuable ore to diggers like Hall Caine, Wilson Barrett, and Marie Corelli. At any rate, this novel of his does not harmonise with his poem of *The Wandering Jew*, published seven years ago, in which the withering

sentence of the Judge upon the Phantom Christ ended with the words—

Uplift thy Cross, and go. Thy doom is said.

There is of course an alternative theory. It is possible that Mr. Buchanan's novel is a long and patient irony, demonstrating with persistent slyness the utter absurdity of Christianity, and the inevitableness of the Religion of Humanity. But the great objection to this theory is that Mr. Buchanan, with all his many gifts, has not hitherto shown himself to be possessed of the qualities of a great ironist.

Perhaps, after all, the real explanation is to be found in Mr. Buchanan's "L'Envoi." In seven energetic but not very poetical stanzas he emphasises his belief in a future life; finally calling upon God to crush him to dust when he believes that there is no conqueror of Death. It is most pathetic—and most childish. The poet is evidently under the impression that bad argument is the better for being versified, that rhyme makes reason, or at least that the vehemence of his expostulation will compel the Universe to listen respectfully, and perhaps to endorse his convictions. Nothing could more clearly demonstrate the hold which this doctrine of a future life has upon Mr. Buchanan's emotions. He is going to live again, he will live again, he demands to live again. How touching! The great Sphinx may not hear, but it wears that old unwavering smile. The sands sweep over and bury the relics of dynasties and empires, but the Sphinx smiles on placidly through the millenniums; smiles at the "fool's hectic of wishing to change the unalterable"—smiles at the boasts of the children of Earth, who would be so much greater than their mother—smiles at the vanity of human wishes that would break the bounds of Nature—smiles at the ephemera's visions of eternity.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christian Monopoly.

LECKY has well said: "It is the special evil of intolerance that it entwines itself around the holiest parts of our nature, and becomes at last so blended with the sense of duty that, as has been finely said, 'Conscience, which restrains every other vice, becomes the prompter here.' Two or three times in the history of mankind its influence has involved a complete dissolution of the moral principle by which society coheres, and the cradle of religious liberty has been rocked by the worst passions of humanity." The truth of these remarks partially illustrates the why and wherefore of the present determined opposition offered by the clergy and others to the issuing of the Sunday editions of the *London Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*. Intolerance has become so blended in the Christian's sense of duty that, in doing what they deem right, the supposed followers of Christ disregard the moral claims and personal freedom of those who are opposed to their narrow and traditional notions.

The Churches of all denominations have always been more or less, upholders of monopoly. For ages they sought to be the sole arbiters of truth; their desire was to place their adherents at the head of every official position, and to give them absolute command over the minds and conduct of the general community. During many centuries professed Christians sought to monopolise morality, religion, science, politics, and the granting of the social rights of the people; with what successful results we learn too well from history and experience. Under the despotic rule of the Church true morality was unknown, religion was a gloomy nightmare, science was perverted, politics meant aristocratic rule, and the social condition of the masses was one of abject slavery. What the aid of Freethought advocacy these evils have, to a large extent, been removed; but Christians are still endeavoring to enforce their policy of monopoly. They act as if they entertained the delusion that Sunday newspapers be under their complete control, and that no one should be allowed to act contrary to their wishes. The present crusade which is going on against Sunday newspapers is, to our mind, one of the most palpable instances ever presented of hypocrisy and gross inconsistency. The *Morning Leader*, and other candidates for pious favour

have recently been publishing the opinions of bishops and ministers of the various denominations as to the wickedness of the *Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* in publishing Sunday editions of their papers. No doubt the *Leader* and its theological coadjutors hope to find it a good stroke of trade policy to support the would-be Christian monopolists in their efforts to thus interfere with personal liberty. Of course it is quite natural that preachers of the Gospel should be very angry at any attempt to interfere with their chief working day, which happens to be the very day that the Sunday newspapers cater for.

The plain fact is that the parsons recognise that, if Sunday papers are read, sermons will be neglected, and the attendance at "places of worship" will fall off. These monopolists adopted a similar policy years ago, when they opposed the opening of libraries, museums, and art galleries on Sundays; and this delayed an important method of public enlightenment for a quarter of a century. Of course we can understand why Christians should try to protect their own selfish interests, even at the sacrifice of consistency and of the principle of freedom for one and all. But we fail to understand the logic of the Church party in the attempt to enforce "Sunday observance." Surely they do not want to play into the hands of the enemy in the endeavor to deprive the working man of his right to use the first day of the week according to his own judgment. The plea put forward by Sabbatarians, that Sunday newspapers would necessarily add to the toil of the working classes, is as hypocritical as it is false. There are plenty of men who are ready and willing to work on Sundays who fail to get sufficient employment on other days. There is not a church where work has not to be done on Sundays. It may be urged that such employment is for the "glory of God"; we prefer to encourage that work which tends to the edification of man. Personally, we are thoroughly opposed to all laws that directly or indirectly enforce the observance of Sunday as a Church institution.

In the first place, it is useless to urge the fallacy that Sabbath was a "divine" appointment. Even if it were so, it was Saturday, not Sunday, that was so appointed. Thus the whole of the Christians, with the exception of a few—such as the Seventh-day Baptists—violate this divine law every week. The ablest scholars on the Christian side admit that they have no sufficient divine authority for changing the day. Now, suppose the Jews were in a majority in the Government, and that they should pass a law from their standpoint, enforcing the "observance" of Sunday according to their view, what would Christians think of such an act of tyranny? We venture to say that such an act would be denounced as an oppression that was not for one moment to be permitted. The Christian public would be up in arms, and such an outcry would be raised as was never before heard against despotism. Then would come a learned Rabbi, who would expound the Old Testament law, and demand to know how Christians, who recognise that law as of divine authority, could find any just cause of complaint. His argument, so far, would be unanswerable. It would be useless to tell him that the day had been changed, for his religion admits of no such change; and, moreover, he would be able to show that the most learned men among the Christians themselves had conceded that the Christian Scriptures contained no record whatever of the appointment of a new Sabbath Day. The Saturday, he would say, is the day that we and our fathers have always kept, and you must keep it too. The profaners of this day are threatened with divine displeasure by the prophets, whose inspiration you yourselves admit, and we desire to avert those judgments from the people; and we are acting, therefore, in a way that becomes good citizens and lovers of our country and of humanity at large.

Now, we say, let Christians take this argument to heart, and for once act on their golden rule of doing to others as they would desire others to do unto them. Besides, the Sabbath of the Bible was merely a day of rest, not of worship. Here, again, the original purpose of the day is lost sight of by those who make the loudest pretensions to respect it. With what grace and consistency can a Christian minister preach a rest day on Sunday, when he himself does the heaviest and hardest part of his labors on that very day—labors for which

he receives almost his entire income? Would it not be quite appropriate for these orthodox fanatics to obey the following injunctions?—"Thou hypocrite; first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Evidently Christians are as little inclined to follow the instructions of their Bible as they are the dictates of justice and common sense.

It must not be supposed that, in taking the position we do upon this subject, we have any desire to compel men to work seven successive days. We have no sympathy with greedy, selfish employers, and our knowledge of working men induces us to believe that they can take care of their own interests when circumstances render it necessary for them to do so. Should it be urged, however, that they are not sufficiently united to enable them to adequately protect themselves, our reply is, the sooner they recognise the importance of better union, and resolve to manfully carry out their duty in this respect, the better. It is undignified upon the part of any class of men to shun improvement just because they lack the energy to consolidate the power necessary to secure it. The lesson of all history is that self-reform, based upon self-reliance, is the highest and noblest of all regenerating influences; and when the "hewers of wood and drawers of water" practically acknowledge this great truth, they need not fear the success of any attempt to unjustly deprive them of their rights. It is simply a half-hearted policy to refuse to remove one wrong because it is feared another will take its place. This is not the nature of the heroic conduct that won reforms in the past. Faithfully directed, the power that wins success can maintain that success and protect it from the assaults of its enemies. The existing laws bearing upon Sunday observance were passed in the interests of one class of the community, and have proved to be inconvenient to a large section of the working men, and also to bear unjustly upon those members of society who do not accept the popular theology. Again, we must state that our object is not to seek to abolish Sunday as a day of cessation from labor, but only to divest it of its so-called sacred character, and thus leave its use—that is, the way in which it should be spent—to the judgment of the individual. Let it be a day of rest from the fatigue of bodily labor, refreshing to the poor man, and supplying him with the means of reinvigorating his body and informing his mind. Such a day we should hail as a boon to mankind. Indeed, there can be no objection to those who choose to do so devoting it to religious purposes, only they must not insist upon regulating the way in which others who differ from them are to spend the day. If it be true that "the Sabbath was made for man," whatever sacredness attaches to it must spring from man, and the use to which he puts it for his own physical, moral, and intellectual good.

With our love for individual and general freedom, we cannot but regard the present religious crusade against the free use of the Sunday as an attempt at persecution, worthy only of the times when the Church was triumphant, and ought not to be tolerated in an age of thought and mental freedom. The battle is begun, and it is our duty to fight against such bigotry till victory crowns our efforts, believing with Byron that "who would be free themselves must strike the blow."

CHARLES WATTS.

Christianity and Social Problems.

SOMEONE, presumably a Secularist, has been kind enough to send me the report of a lecture, by the Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, on "Christianity and Social Problems." The pamphlet is accompanied by the request that I would read it, and, if possible, criticise its contents in the columns of the *Freethinker*. Well, I have read it; and, after going through that far from educative proceeding, I can only assume that Mr. Brooke selected his title on pretty much the same grounds that Artemus Ward called one of his lectures "The Babes in the Wood." He said that, as that was about the only subject his lecture did *not* deal with, he thought that it might as

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well go in the title. As, after carefully reading through Mr. Brooke's address, I find little on social problems, and still less on Christianity—so long as that word is accepted with a fair regard to its historical and Biblical connotations—I can only suppose that he also was unconsciously animated by the same feeling in giving a name to the lecture before me.

Some Christianity there may be in the pamphlet; but it is of that nebulously democratic character so beloved by modern pulpitering popularity hunters, and might as conceivably emanate from Sheik Quilliam preaching in the Mohammedan mosque at Liverpool, or Dr. Adler lecturing in a Jewish synagogue in London. The nearest approach to Christianity is, that it consists in (1) "The Universal Fatherhood of God"; (2) "The Universal Brotherhood of Man"; and (3) the belief "that every soul of man" (by which he presumably means the soul of every man), "being a child of God, is unbreakably connected with God." All these are beliefs that might be, and are, held by Jews and Deists, who ignore the New Testament entirely; while the divinity of Jesus, which is the distinctive and essential feature of Christianity, is not honored by even a passing notice. Perhaps, however, Mr. Brooke might argue that the belief in the divinity of Jesus has no very important bearing on social problems; if so, I cordially agree with him thus far.

And what bearings have these beliefs on social problems? Well, in the first place, we are warned that we must not expect to find them supported by either reason or experience. We are solemnly cautioned that—

"To believe in the Universal Fatherhood of God in the face of all the misery and horrors of humanity seems all but impossible. To believe in the Universal Brotherhood of Man seems still more impossible.....There is not one of these truths capable of being proved by reasoning. It is well to remember that, and to know that all the time spent on intellectual discussion of them is time, not altogether wasted, for the discussion stimulates the intellect, but time which might be better employed in the work of loving and helping men. These truths do not exist in the world of the intellect, but in the world of the spirit. They are to be believed in; they cannot be demonstrated.....The more we reason about them, the obscurer they become.....Not only have we no evidence for them which appeals to the understanding, but we have also a large mass of evidence, directly appealing to the understanding, which seems to contradict them. We have to believe in them, if we would have them, in the teeth of that evidence.....But faith transcends these experiences, and believes in these truths, as the master truths, in the teeth of all the contradictions of the understanding."

So that, whatever Mr. Brooke's sociology may be, it rests upon a number of ideas that we must accept in defiance of all that experience and common sense teach. All that one need say is, that a sociology resting on such a basis is one that can be productive of but little good; while a class of people that can listen to such lectures and imagine that they contain any serious suggestions towards social improvement constitute one of the chief evils that a sound science of sociology must seek to remove.

It is not at all easy to see the connection between Mr. Brooke's premise and his conclusion; but, "as faith believes in the teeth of all the contradictions of the understanding," we are assured that the Fatherhood of God means that our "acts and laws should become the embodiment of God's character." If people do wrong, "it is because they forget to be in harmony with the character of God." The reason why in England social reforms are so delayed is, again, because we "have not kept close enough to the character of God," and so all we have to do is to find out the character of God and imitate him. That is all! but how we are to accomplish this the preacher nowhere condescends to inform his hearers. Instead, he talks of keeping close to the character of God, as though an unquestionable estimate of his nature had been issued in a sixpenny volume, or as though it were as easy to find out the character of the deity as of Lord Salisbury. Never does it dawn upon him that all the warring sects of Christendom imagine that they *are* keeping close to the character of God, or that best part of the evils that religion has inflicted on the world has been due to their being "in accord with man's idea of divine justice."

So far as I am aware, there are only two sources from which orthodox Christianity can pretend to get any

idea of God's character. One is revelation, the other nature. Christians of the more educated class so generally drop the Bible as giving an accurate picture of God's character that I need not waste time over that aspect of the matter. And it is certain that, if we gather the character of Deity from nature, Butler's argument, that the God that can be inferred from a study of natural phenomena must be at least as bad, probably worse, than the God of the Bible, is as much to the point and as unanswerable as ever. "Till the character of God rules in our legislation," says Mr. Brooke, "our society is not much better than that of a crowd of animals on an island. The weakest are devoured, the less cunning are oppressed." Well, in the name of all that is reasonable, what is it that rules a crowd of animals on an island? Does he paraphrase the old saying by believing that God made man, and the Devil made everything else? If there is a God, the crowd of animals are his production. He has no disturbing force of human vice or cunning to disarrange his plans, and if, where his wishes can be least interfered with, "the weakest are devoured, and the less cunning are oppressed," why talk about allowing "the character of God to rule in our legislation"? As a matter of fact, it is only as human sympathy and human intelligence modify the play of natural forces that have, on the lecturer's hypothesis, been designed by Providence, that social life becomes possible and desirable.

It is characteristic of Mr. Brooke, as it is of Christians in general when dealing with social problems, that he indulges either in vague formulas, so general as to be almost useless, or specific statements that are in direct conflict with the religion he professes to follow. What, for example, is the value of such phrases as "The Fatherhood of God," or "The Brotherhood of Man," in deciding conduct? Pre-Christians, Christians, and non-Christians have all held these beliefs, and have managed to square them with the most diversified conduct. Mohammed assured his followers that "God hath ordained that your *brother* shall be your slave"; and, until recent times, Christians seemed to indulge in the same belief. All classes of the community, no matter what their occupation or the injuries they inflict on others, are willing to subscribe to the belief in the brotherhood of man; the difference lies in their translation of it into actual conduct. And what determines the nature of the translation? Not Christianity; that can only pile vagueness on vagueness by telling us to interpret the belief in the brotherhood of man by the principle that "The laborer is worthy of his hire." And whoever doubted this? No one ever doubted that the laborer *was* worthy of his hire; the only difficulty was and is, to determine what a man's labor was worth, and in this direction Christianity gives about as much help as would a study of astronomy.

As a matter of fact, such generalisations have no intrinsic coercive force, and no enlightening power worth troubling about. Can anyone predict, from knowing that a person believes in the brotherhood of man, how he will behave under any given circumstances? If we know his *character* beforehand, probably; but if we do not know his character, we are as much in the dark as though we were told, as the basis of a calculation, that he believed in the story of William Tell and the apple. The mere fact of so many orders of men accepting this doctrine, while indulging in courses of conduct that are diametrically opposed one to the other, is sufficient to show that such generalisations are forms in which people clothe the expression of their character, and not the animating principle of their conduct. Some day, perhaps, Christians will realize that the world is not to be saved by the repetition of liberal-sounding sentiments, the abstract truthfulness of which none dispute, but on the particular interpretation of which scarcely two are agreed.

Descending to details, Mr. Brooke tells us that a proper sense of the relation of Christianity to social life would lead to the "founding of municipal Christianity in every town in England," and the securing to each individual of "good air and good light in a decent dwelling.....abundance of good water.....healthy food and drink.....education not only in primary but in secondary schools.....good libraries, and enough, after the day's work is done, of honest leisure to use them.....the general supervision of the health of the whole community."

munty, and the destruction, no matter what interests are involved, of all that is dangerous to health." The programme does considerable credit to the rev. gentleman's sense of social requirements; but it is just as strongly condemnatory of his consistency as a Christian. Consider the consistency of a follower of one who made the emphatic declaration, "My kingdom is not of this world," and who, if we are to trust the New Testament, deliberately held aloof from all the political and social life of his time, advocating municipal action as the only true Christianity! "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed.....but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you," said Jesus. Not a bit of it, says Mr. Brooke; first of all get enough to eat and drink, and to clothe yourself with; and then, and then only, will you be able to reach the higher life. Don't expect to cure disease by reliance on the promise that "Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, it shall be granted unto you," or the kindred promise that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up"; the only way to remove disease is by having "good air and good light, healthy food and drink, and abundance of good water." A sanitary inspector is worth far more than the Holy Ghost, municipal action is far more efficacious than prayer, public libraries and leisure time are better as a means of cultivating character than prayerful meditation or religious formulas. And so say all of us—only we are not all Christians, and have not before us the difficult task of trying to harmonise an impracticable creed with the requirements of social existence.

But we must not, after all, be too hard on Mr. Brooke. The ablest man saddled with a bad case cannot be more than plausible; and plausibility is only satisfying to the superficial. Mr. Brooke is certainly a man of ability, and, so far as my knowledge goes, far less given to popular posing than preachers of the Parker-Clifford-cum-Horton type. Yet when he comes to deal with the subject before us, while his common sense saves him from falling into the extravagances of the men I have named, he is compelled either to indulge in the vaguest and tendencies which it does not possess. For the plain fact is that Christianity, as a socially regenerative force, is one of the most hideous failures history presents us with. It has never initiated any new conception of political circumstances rendered its advocacy profitable. Usually it has taken the society it found itself in—a Monarchy, a Republic, an Oligarchy, or a Plutocracy—and given it its blessing and its support. That it should now be bidding for the support of democracy is only a further illustration of the same truth. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard its spots.

C. COHEN.

Slandering Saint Polly.

HISTORICAL research proves that our ancestors had pilots had our forefathers. This continuity of successful imposition has made the assumption of arrogance an inherited trait in the priestly mind. This is as marked a characteristic to-day as it was when the ancient clerics rode roughshod over the bodies of the peoples of long ago. The newspapers are just now reporting a case in point from Australia. It appears that the chief justice, in his summing-up at Melbourne in the notorious Boot Trunk Tragedy, classed the Magdalen with Nell Gwynne and Peg Woffington. This delicate reference excited the bile of a paid servant of what Carlyle calls "the Great Lying Church," who rejoices in the name of O'Farrell. This cleric, replying from that coward's castle, the pulpit, said, or rather shouted, that "as Mary Magdalen was admitted to the friendship of our Savior she should have been above criticism from any man, no matter how highly his position or what his country." Hallelujah! What price Judas? The journalists, scenting "good copy" in this wrangle, browsed among the biblical commentaries for a few hours; and the various papers were soon engaged in a religious dispute of the first order.

We should be sorry to say how many times we have fallen asleep over that volume which some wag once described as "the source of England's greatness." The Grand Old Volume is not altogether so lively as we could wish, except in some places, which are "blue" enough to paralyse even the green readers of *The Pink'un*. We may, however, say right here that our impression is that Mary Magdalen was a —er —er—naughty girl, and loved not only "not wisely but too well," but may be a dozen or so as well, which was, of course, highly improper. Of all the sacred flames, Saint Polly burns the brightest. Christian ladies and gentlemen name institutions for lost cats after her to this day, which, to say the least, is indiscreet, unless the lady in question was "no better than she ought to have been."

Anyone possessed of a Nonconformist conscience must feel it his or her duty to regard her saintship as a baneful asteroid, which, we are advised, is not a libellous term. It is very painful for us to have to write in this manner about a lady who, if the Gospels are correct, very nearly became Mrs. Jesus Christ.

As it was, she had a narrow escape from an awful fate. Marrying Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde would have been child's play to marrying the Trinity in Unity. But enough! The average man doesn't care whether Saint Polly was a quintessence of the world, the flesh, and the devil, or simply a Sunday school teacher. He merely resents the arrogance of the O'Farrells, and others of that ilk.

MIMNERMUS.

In Re Charles Watts.

To the Members of the National Secular Society.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I desire to plead the cause of one of our lecturers, who has met with a great mishap. He went to America last December on a lecturing tour, to include Canada, in both of which countries he is well known. He caught the then prevailing disease, influenza—called by the Americans after the French name, *La Grippe*. It gripped him so fiercely that his life for a time was despaired of by his doctors, and, but for a robust constitution, he must have succumbed.

After being attended to by two doctors, he was ordered to return to his family in London the moment he was able to travel, as he could not be fit for his work for several months. Thus his mission had to end, to the disappointment of a great many audiences who were expecting him.

I saw him a week ago, and his condition fully confirms the opinions his doctors gave. He requires peace and comfort for some time. I sent him £10, and a few others have done the like. But, to keep mind and body at ease while he recovers from a lingering illness, he will require much help ere we can see him again on the public platform defending our propaganda or opposing the prevalent superstition. I am sure that thousands who have heard him in the past, and who will gladly welcome him to the platform again, will be pleased to respond to this appeal on his behalf.

I shall be glad to receive cheques, postal orders, or postage stamps; and to the delegates who will attend the Conference in Birmingham during Whitsun week I pray them that they will come armed with the authority of their Branches to contribute to my appeal. I have a pamphlet of some eighty pages now in the press of Mr. C. A. Watts, which I expect to be ready in a week or so. The subject is a written correspondence that passed between a Christian clergyman and myself on Christianity and Agnosticism. I will present a copy of it to every subscriber of five shillings and over, and I trust I may thus have to give away a large portion of the issue. All donations will be published in the *Freethinker*, by favor of Mr. Foote.

GEORGE ANDERSON,
35a Great George-street, Westminster, S.W.

P.S.—I have not mentioned the subject to the object of my appeal, but have twice before performed the same service to our great chief, the late Charles Bradlaugh, in which I was successful, during his long Parliamentary struggle of years. I am thus emboldened to try again for one of his sincere admirers, feeling sure that you will not disappoint me; in fact, I want to make this a test case of your sincerity in the cause of Freethought for my future guidance therewith.

Mr. Will Thorne, who ratted on the *Freethinker* question at West Ham, is getting it pretty hot from some of his own colleagues. At a recent meeting Alderman Athey said that "The only man of the Labor Group who said he would not be influenced by the parsons was Will Thorne, but he voted as the parsons wanted him to."

Acid Drops.

ONE of our readers wrote to the Rev. Dr. Parker anent his "God damn the Sultan," asking him whether the Atonement would not allow even Satan to escape damnation, while shutting the gates of salvation on such a man as John Morley. Dr. Parker replied: "No time for private correspondence. Forgive all who repent." On the whole, we think Dr. Parker's outburst was better than his shuffling.

Mr. Reader Harris, lawyer and evangelist, does not join Dr. Parker in damning the Sultan. He prays for him, and sends him a telegram to that effect. We should like to see Abdul's face while reading that dispatch. What a smile he would wear! Something like Old Nick's over a Sunday-school tract.

Evidently the Sultan is as good an actor as Emperor William himself. After receiving Mr. Reader Harris's telegram, he tendered through the Turkish Ambassador his hearty thanks for the prayers of the Pentecostal League. What delicious comedy!

A long rigmarole, signed by a lot of "eminent" men of God, from the Archbishop of Canterbury down to—well, the lowest man in the list, whoever that is—has been printed in protest against the new Sunday newspapers. These gentlemen affect to be anxious about our day of rest, but they let the cat out of the bag by referring to nefarious attempts to "secularise" the Sunday. There you have the whole case in a nutshell. To secularise the Sunday means to divert it from religious to human uses, and that is what the men of God hate as naturally—for business reasons—as the Devil is said to hate holy water.

We have already said that we don't understand the action of men like Mr. Sydney Webb and Mr. John Burns on this question. If we were to hazard a guess, we might suppose that each of them occupies a *seat* and is anxious to keep it. Both are members of the London County Council, and Mr. Burns is also a member of Parliament.

Mr. Burns has handed in the following notice of motion in the House of Commons: "To call attention to the evils resulting from the action of certain proprietors of London newspapers in regard to the recent issue of a seven-day paper, and to move—That, in the opinion of this House, the publication in this country of a continuous week-day paper by a Sunday issue as an integral part of the same newspaper is contrary to the best interests of the nation, as it inflicts a large amount of unnecessary Sunday labor without any commensurate advantage to the community; that it endangers the principle of one day of rest in seven, to which the British nation has persistently adhered; that it is opposed to the unanimous recommendations of the Berlin Labor Conference, 1890, and contrary to the underlying principle of the Factory Acts; and that therefore legislation is necessary to secure cessation of work once a week for at least twenty-four hours."

We cannot compliment Mr. Burns on the elegance and lucidity of this notice, nor on its logical character. The reference to the Factory Acts is singularly infelicitous. They were intended for the protection of women and children, and all the persons involved in the Sunday newspaper question are men. Moreover, the journalists who write the matter in these newspapers are well able to state their own grievance, if they have one; and the compositors who put it in type have an old and powerful Trade Union, which is not likely to submit to evil conditions of labor without making a row over them. We wonder whether Mr. Burns knows that the *Daily Telegraph* proprietor, for instance, employs Trade Union hands, and that the hours of labor fixed by the Compositors' Union are fifty-four per week.

We need not stop to discuss the "unanimous recommendations of the Berlin Labor Congress, 1890." That Congress was no doubt useful, in its way; but it has not relieved us from the duty of exercising our own common sense. And common sense is precisely what is most wanted in this matter.

In face of the *Daily Telegraph's* declaration that no one connected with it works seven days a week, and in face of the *New York Sun's* declaration that no one connected with any Sunday newspaper works seven days a week on the other side of the Atlantic, Mr. Burns must be understood as calling for a law to prevent the issue of Sunday newspapers altogether. If he doesn't mean that, what on earth *does* he mean? It is idle to talk about the Sunday issue of a week-day paper, as though that were something particularly sinful. The proprietor of the *Daily Chronicle* publishes *Lloyd's*. The proprietors of the *Globe* publish *The People*. The proprietors of the *Westminster* publish the *Weekly Dispatch*. Are we to assume that the proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph* would be acting quite justifiably if he called his Sunday edition by some independent name—say the *Sunday Telephone*?

One day's rest in seven is an excellent arrangement. But who wants to disturb it? In a complex society like ours, in which so much industry is of the nature of personal service, it is perfectly absurd to suppose that we can all rest on the same day. The majority may rest on Sunday, but if they are to make any use of the day at all the minority must work on that day. What is the use of Sunday to bricklayers, masons, carpenters, clerks, and shop attendants, if other workers are not occupied in running tram cars, trains, etc., etc.? Evidently we must accept one of two alternatives. Either everybody must rest during the same twenty-four hours, or some must work during that period and have another day's rest in some other part of the week. The first alternative would make Sunday a day of misery to everyone. The second alternative is the one that conduces to the general happiness of society.

Mr. Burns talks about "unnecessary Sunday labor." But who is to decide what is unnecessary? A Sunday train is unnecessary to the man who doesn't want to use it. Even Sunday preaching is unnecessary to the man who doesn't want to hear it. What is necessary, or unnecessary, cannot be determined by abstract discussion; it can only be determined by practice under the rule of liberty and fair-play. Let us have freedom all round, subject to the condition that no individual worker is required to labor more than (say) the Trade Union number of hours per week.

A lot of nonsense is talked about the newsagents. They supply a good dozen of Sunday newspapers already, and can it mean their physical, intellectual, and moral ruin if they supply two more, making the number fourteen? The big houses would not find it pay to open on Sunday at all. It is the small news vendor who does the Sunday trade. He keeps open on Sunday morning for a few hours. But he has plenty of time on his hands—as a news vendor—during the week. As a rule, he doesn't work eight hours a day, or anything like it; and he is generally glad to make a little extra out of the Sunday newspapers.

So much for John Burns's motion. And now let us take the climax of this agitation. On Saturday, May 6, a children's demonstration was held at Exeter Hall in connection with the London Missionary Society; and the following resolution was carried unanimously:—"That we children assembled at this great meeting desire to express our strong determination to support our fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, and Sunday school teachers in resisting the circulation of Sunday newspapers. And we respectfully ask the proprietors of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* to consider this children's petition and withdraw the Sunday issue, which is such a standing disgrace to our Christian country."

Fancy all those little ones standing up in support of their fathers and mothers! It is really *too* touching. The best line of the reserves is called up, and the very "kids" are enrolled in the Anti-Sunday Newspaper Army.

Seriously, the unanimous resolution of a meeting of boys would be entitled to just as much consideration. It would have to be transacted for them, as, of course, the resolution was transacted for those Exeter Hall children.

The chairman of that Exeter Hall meeting, the Rev. C. Silvester Thorne, declared that "already a lot of boys had been withdrawn from Sunday schools to take part in the circulation of Sunday newspapers." Fudge, sir, fudge, Sunday newspapers are distributed in the morning, and Sunday schools meet in the afternoon.

Were there any honesty in this agitation, it would be directed against Monday newspapers. Sunday newspapers are not *produced* on Sunday. Monday newspapers are produced on Sunday. For that reason a wealthy Scotch merchant would not buy a Monday newspaper as he traveled up to Glasgow the morning after the blessed Sabbath. He only borrowed it from his neighbor in the train. Thus he satisfied his conscience and saved his bawbee.

We have this to say in conclusion. The agitation against the new Sunday newspapers—for there are plenty of old ones—is got up by the Black Army, and its motive is pure Sabbatarianism. Those who now oppose Sunday newspapers are those who opposed Sunday trains, Sunday trams, Sunday cars, Sunday lectures, Sunday music, and the Sunday opening of museums, art galleries, and public libraries. They come forward with fresh masks every time, but the same old faces are behind them. Pull off the masks, and you see the sour, malignant faces of the clerical protectionists who oppose all opposition to their business on the special day when they are working it for all it is worth.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been speaking of reunion with Rome, which, he says, is not likely to take place for a considerable while, for the extraordinary reason that it was the Church of Rome that separated from the Church of England, and not the latter from her. Consequently

Church of Rome has to amend her present ways to come up to the Anglican standard.

There is a serious indication of the way the wind blows. The successor of Cranmer and Parker, and the head of the Protestant Episcopal Church of England, is no longer proud of "Protesting," and the Glorious Reformation, and the casting-off the usurpation of the Scarlet Woman and of the bondage to Antichrist, and all the rest of it we used to hear as children, but declares bluntly that the Church of England never separated from Rome at all, in the teeth of the Acts of Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Elizabeth, which repudiate the pretended authority of the Bishop of Rome, and make it High Treason to admit or declare that authority.

Of course it would be possible to quibble and say that a denial of the Pope's authority does not imply separating from Rome; but there are two parties to a union, and separation is the declaration of independence from the superiority of the greater and ruling power.

Such subterfuges are audacious, but should be watched. If Dr. Temple can be stricken blind to Acts of Parliament, what may he fail to see next?

Just one more little acid drop on this point. Like Canon Gregory, Dr. Temple is verging closely on the acknowledgment of the Pope's superiority. There is a recent Act of Parliament (9 and 10 Vic., c. 59) which punishes with deprivation the holding of any pre-eminence in the Pope or See of Rome.

Samuel Webb, the well-sinker, who was entombed at Brightlingsea, but fortunately not suffocated, was dug out after eight hours' hard labor by a number of willing hands. He could hear the workers, and they could hear him singing "Rock of Ages." By-and-bye they heard him call out, "Tell my wife that I am trusting in Jesus." It was lucky for him that other persons were engaged in his rescue. Had it been left to Jesus, Samuel Webb would not have seen his wife again.

"Goody," says the *Daily News*, is "the plague-spot of the religious tract." Indeed, the word "tract" has become so odious that it is proposed to substitute the word "leaflet." But what is the use of changing the word without changing the thing? A tract by any other name would be just as "goody."

Rev. W. R. Mowll, addressing one of the May meetings at Exeter Hall, declared that England was in need of a second Reformation. The British stage, he said, was distinctly immoral, and he hoped a determined Christian Crusade would be carried on against it. Well, the reverend gentleman has our sympathy. We quite understand the hatred with which the clergy regard theatres and other such places of entertainment. It is a question of business, we might say bread-and-butter.

The Liverpool School Board, by eight votes to seven, has adopted the new Free Church Catechism for use in the elementary schools. This is a beautiful illustration of the sincerity of Nonconformist objections to sectarian religious teaching. They only object to catechisms when these emanate from the Church of England. It is also worthy of notice that this Free Church Catechism has no sort of official authority. It was drawn up by a self-elected and irresponsible committee of Nonconformist ministers.

"Christian Science" does not seem to suffer from its exposures. The church in Bryanston-street is crowded on Sunday evenings. The church form the majority of the congregation, but a few men keep them in countenance, or turn up for some other reason. We hear that a Mr. Miller is to be imported from Canada to boom the "Christian Science" movement in London. Meanwhile, we understand that "Christian Science spoons," with the features of Mrs. Eddy on them, are having a brisk sale at two dollars each. We should have thought there were Christian Science spoons enough already.

Lord Wolsley understands the value of outward and visible signs, and the value of symbolism, as well as the Church; consequently, he has ordered that bandsmen and band boys and other soldiers who may sing in choirs are no longer to cover their uniforms with that of the church—the surplice. In this he is right, and shows his astuteness, and, probably, his learning; for wearing the uniform of the priest induces modern priestliness of character, which is not wanted in modern armies, while the surplice has been in former times the badge of the Churches' political over-lordship. When the Poles accepted the suzerainty of the Pope, he gave it on the condition that the men and boys wore surplices on Sundays and holidays as their uniform as retainers of the Church.

There is no end to the audacity of clericals. In the last number of the *Methodist Times*, edited by the Rev. Hugh

Price Hughes, we note the following answer to a correspondent: "Gospel History.....any book attempting to deny the existence of Jesus Christ would be so much waste paper. There is as much historical evidence of the life and death of our Savior as there is of the existence of Julius Cæsar." Now the man who wrote that is a monstrous ignoramus or a frightful liar. There is not a single contemporary reference to Jesus Christ in Greek, Roman, or Jewish literature. Even the Christians recognised this, and it induced them to forge passages in Josephus and Phlegon, besides concocting the Acts of Pilate and other ridiculous fables. All the "history" of Jesus Christ is contained in the four Gospels, which were written no one knows exactly when and no one knows by whom. The sources of information are entirely Christian—that is to say, entirely partisan; and the authors of them were superstitionists without the slightest critical faculty. Nevertheless, it is of course open for any Christian to say, "Well, the evidence, such as it is, is good enough for me." But when he says it is as good as the evidence we have about Julius Cæsar, he talks like a fool or a rogue. We have contemporary evidence about Julius Cæsar. We have the records of rational historians like Sallust. We have the poems of Lucan and Virgil. We have the writings of Cicero, who knew Cæsar well, and was occupied with him in public affairs. We have the writings of Cæsar himself, giving a minute account of his campaigns. We have also monuments, busts, coins, medals, etc.—things that cannot easily lie or easily be falsified. Much more might be said, but this is sufficient to show the amazing ignorance or reckless mendacity of the *Methodist Times*.

According to a report in the *Daily News*, the Christian Evidence Society, which recently held its annual meeting, declares "there is, in all ranks of society, unrest, inquiry, scepticism, and unbelief, calling for prompt, judicious, and earnest treatment." What we fail to understand, first of all, is why "inquiry" demands this painful attention. But stay; on second thoughts we do understand it. Inquiry has always been the real bane of Christianity. Yes, the Christian Evidence Society does well to be alarmed at it. At the same time, there is a certain indiscretion in confessing to such a sentiment. Some people will be tempted to say that, if there were no inquiry, there would be no room for the Christian Evidence Society; and that would be awkward for Messrs. Engström and Waterman, its two distinguished secretaries.

"Prompt" treatment the Christian Evidence Society may apply to scepticism and unbelief, but does it apply to the "judicious and earnest" variety? Many of its speakers are not judicious; sometimes they are not even decent. They are too apt to talk personalities instead of principles. A few of them have mouths that would take a lot of carbolic to cleanse them. Cauterisation might be needed to do the job thoroughly.

Walt Whitman exclaimed against the never-ending audacity of elected persons. Of course he was speaking from American experience, but the evil which aroused his indignation is common everywhere. Officials are appointed to do a certain thing, and they nearly always attempt to do other things; that is to say, they are constantly seeking to enlarge their own powers, at the expense of the rights and freedom of their fellow-citizens.

Take the case of the mails, for instance. There is something to be said for preventing downright, unquestionable obscenity from passing through the post. Certain letterpress and illustrations would be regarded by every sane person as obscene, their object being merely to tickle concupiscence and inflame the passions. But the Postmaster-General, in the United States, is not satisfied with checking the traffic in such publications. He just makes his own opinions on controverted questions in morality the standard of judgment for the whole nation. What he believes is decent; what he disbelieves is indecent. And, being armed with despotic powers, he proceeds to enforce this arbitrary law of constructive obscenity; with the result that publications can hardly live which incur his displeasure. Nor is this all; for prosecutions are sometimes initiated by the Postal authorities, and editors find themselves in gaol for "obscenity" without having printed a word that could not be uttered without offence in a drawing-room. Their opinions are branded as "obscene," and they are punished accordingly; whereas every man with a grain of sense, who will take the trouble to think, must be perfectly aware that an obscene opinion is an utter inconceivability.

Charles Moore, editor of the *Blue Grass Blade*, is at present doing two years' imprisonment for an article which appeared in his paper. He was prosecuted for sending obscene matter through the American mails. But, as far as we can make out, there was no contention at the trial that his language was obscene. He had merely given publicity to certain opinions as to the marriage laws. And the argument of the State attorney-general, backed up by the judge, was simply this: The marriage laws are the standard of purity; Charles Moore has called them in question; he is therefore guilty of impurity.

and as impurity and obscenity are one and the same thing, he deserves to be punished with the utmost rigor of the law.

When an argument like that passes for good logic, and constructive crimes are manufactured in this fashion, every citizen with an idea in his head virtually walks about with a noose around his neck, which any bigot can tighten at his pleasure.

Now take the case of *Secular Thought*, Toronto. A satirical poem appeared in its Easter week number, and, as the Postmaster-General of Canada did not like the said poem, he gave orders that *Secular Thought* was to be stopped in the mails. Now nine-tenths of the copies printed are circulated through the post; and the Postmaster-General really says to Editor Ellis: "If you don't edit every issue of your paper according to *my* taste, I will not allow you to circulate it at all." And the cream of the joke is that the Canadians regard themselves as a free people.

Another curious illustration of how officials rule us, over the law, and sometimes in spite of it, has just arisen in England. Imprisonment for debt is abolished by law, but the judges have brought it back under cover of what they call "contempt of court." That is, they tell a debtor to pay, and if he doesn't they commit him to prison—not for being in debt, or for not paying, but for contemning the judge. It may be argued that this is a good way of punishing fraudulent debtors, and that no man is sent to gaol unless he *can* pay and *will not*. But this is all nonsense. Anybody who has watched the proceedings in a County Court knows that men are committed to prison in the loosest and most arbitrary fashion. The present writer on one occasion saw an order given for ten days against a working man, earning as alleged by the plaintiff only 25s. a week, simply because he did not appear to answer the judgment summons. He might have been ill, or on a job he could not leave without losing it altogether; but that didn't matter, he was merely a working man, and he had contemned the court. Well, the next case was that of a debtor who was alleged to be earning £250 a year. He also failed to appear. But did the judge give *him* ten days? Oh dear no! He pointed out that a man might be earning £5 a week, and yet be unable to pay a debt, because of the appearances he had to keep up in his position. "Ten days" came pat in the one case, and "No order" came just as pat in the other.

Debtors imprisoned for "contempt of court" have, of course, been simply detained in prison, and treated just like prisoners awaiting trial. But it now appears that the Home Office has issued new regulations to the prison authorities—regulations which apparently have the force of law, although they have never been sanctioned by the legislature. Debtors are in future to be locked up in separate cells; they will have to do prison work and eat prison food; only they will not have to wear the prison clothes. Thus the Home Office takes upon itself to make debt a crime, while the law declares it to be nothing of the kind.

We very much doubt whether these Home Office regulations are legal. The point might be contested by one of their victims bringing an action against the prison governor. But no doubt the Home Office feels that the victims are too poor and helpless to defend themselves. Here, then, is an opportunity for some philanthropist. There are thousands of debtors in gaol, although imprisonment for debt is abolished; and these unfortunates, who have really committed no crime known to the law, ought not to be beyond the reach of compassion.

The Bible has a lot to answer for in the matter of Christian names. Liberator Balfour's name of "Jabez" and the great Hooley's name of "Terah" were both derived from the Blessed Book. But the worst case we ever heard of occurred the other day at a Southwark inquest, where a juror answered to the name of Simeon Ezekiah Jacob Isaac Noah Abraham Zimmerman.

Walter John Cooper, a fireman, of Stratford, got off his engine while it was being shunted to let an express pass. He then placed himself between the metals, and was killed by the express. The driver said he had been strange for a fortnight; he talked of religion, to the exclusion of every other topic.

Bruges, in Belgium, boasts the possession of some of the Holy Blood of Christ. It was brought there by a noble Crusader in 1148, and presented to the Chapel of St. Basil. Every year that ridiculous relic—probably the gore of a sheep or a jackass—is carried in procession through the town. All the clergy put on their finest raiment, and when the Papal Nuncio holds aloft that Holy Blood the people all fall upon their knees in adoration.

Good old Catholic Church! What a past-mistress she is in the arts of deceit and imposture! She is now working up next year's pilgrimages to Rome. During the Jubilee the

Pope will grant liberal indulgences to sinners. It is expected that 400,000 pilgrims will visit the Holy City. Every one of them will give something, and the Papal exchequer will be filled to overflowing.

Elias Torr, fifty-two, farmer and local preacher, in Nottinghamshire, got drunk and shot his daughter dead. He is under arrest. His principal desire was to attend the funeral.

The Church Army, which is a kind of rival of the Salvation Army, has "boldly embarked" on schemes demanding £150,000 a year for the next two years, towards which the Archbishop of Canterbury contributes £10. It is amusing to watch the frantic efforts of these "Army" organisations to transact what they call "social" business. This Church Army, for instance, has 72 labor houses and other institutions in London and the provinces, and the report says that 100 outcasts pass yearly through each home. That is to say, 7,200 in all. And this goes on year after year, without any wonder on the part of these "social" operators as to the social causes of such a vast number of "outcasts." The Christian method, indeed, has always been a superficial one, dealing with effects, and never penetrating to causes.

Here and there, of course, a Christian does see there is something wrong in all this "charity." A live Bishop (of Bristol) presided at the recent annual meeting of the Church Army, and in the course of his speech he declared that "mere philanthropy was played out." We quite agree with him, but what is his remedy? "They appealed," he said, "to the divine spark in the most degraded, with the conviction that the Divine power was supporting their efforts." Well, what is the result? It is stated that about 50 per cent. of the 7,200 "outcasts" obtain situations and a fresh start in life. Evidently, then, the "Divine power" fails to the extent of the other 50 per cent. And what of those who do get a fresh start? Are they followed up? Is a record kept of how they turn out? If so, it would no doubt be interesting reading.

We venture to think that a given state of human nature, in a given state of society, will produce a certain amount of crime and vice. This is really proved by statistics, as was pointed out by Buckle. All the efforts of Church Armies and Salvation Armies make no appreciable difference in the general result; and for the reason already pointed out—namely, that they never touch the causes of evil, but only deal with effects; just as if a few thousand gallons of water were taken out of a muddy stream, and purified, and then thrown back into the stream again.

Take the Salvation Army. General Booth boasts of having something like a million followers in this country. He reforms drunkards, makes all his soldiers teetotallers, and even compels them to swear off tobacco. On the face of it, therefore, the Salvation Army ought to be a source of embarrassment to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But it is nothing of the kind. The revenue from drink and tobacco goes on increasing, and has been increasing all the time that General Booth has been in active partnership with God Almighty.

Amongst the May Meetings we may note that of the Bible Society, which boasts of circulating the Book of God in 330 languages and dialects. This Society's income last year was £219,966, and its expenditure £224,736. The sum arising from sales was £88,211, so that no less than £136,525 was spent on the gratuitous circulation of the Bible. Still, whole, we regard this as a frightful waste of money. We commend the case of this Bible Society to the attention of Freethinkers. Is it not high time that something was done systematically and on an adequate scale, to promote the circulation of Freethought literature amongst the people?

Rationalists will turn with interest to the May issue of our veteran contemporary, the *Westminster Review*. The present number contains an outspoken article on "Has there been a Deluge?" by Mr. A. O'Neill Daunt, who sums up the matter in the following forcible words: "It is certain that if we are to regard the narrative of the Flood as an accurate statement of events that actually took place we must be prepared to dismiss the most positive conclusions of geology, history, ethnology, zoology, and other sciences, as not better than simple delusions, and discard the doctrine of evolution as the merest dream." Another article on "Religion in Novels," by Mr. W. H. Bowen, is very readable. Other contributions on topical subjects make up a most interesting issue of this high-class review.

The *Open Court* for May has a fine portrait of Condillac for frontispiece, followed by an article on the famous French philosopher from the pen of Professor L. Lévy-Bruhl. There is also a very interesting article on "The Evolution of Speech" by Professor Ribot. Other items make up an excellent number.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, May 14, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London; 7.30, 'The Czar's Love Feast; or, Christian War and Peace.'

May 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.

J. YOUNG.—We insert what we think suitable—the privilege of every editor. Contributors must not be astonished if they sometimes "appear" and sometimes don't. It's no use swearing at editors, for they are all damned already.

G. F. DUPLAV.—We are quite aware that every man is the centre of his own world—that is, the centre of his own sphere of activity. What is called his greatness or goodness means the extent of his circumference. Altruism only means that a man is interested in many persons or things. We are also quite aware that we are all "built" as we are; and just as you are built to object to much that we say, we are built to say it. Does that satisfy you?

G. W. BLVTHE.—Of course there is something to be said for capital punishment. Comte and Mill both supported it. At the same time, we think the balance of argument is against it; not so much from the victim's point of view as from the point of view of society itself.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Thanks for the list, which will no doubt be useful.

W. COX.—See paragraphs.

R. P. EDWARDS writes that the new Secular lecture station on Hampstead Heath has been maintained with great difficulty. Last Sunday the Christian Evidence people opened fire there, pitching their platform ten feet from the Secular one—just the way to create a disturbance. The police acted with impartiality: they stopped the Secular meeting instead of warning the C. E. S. gang to keep at a respectable distance. A sergeant and eight constables followed the little band of Secular workers round the town, treading on their heels, and preventing them from stopping anywhere. We hear that all meetings are to be forbidden on the Heath. Good old free England!

MISS EMMA BRADLAUGH FUND.—R. Forder acknowledges:—W. Hunt, £1 1s.; W. Saunders, £1 1s.; G. Carrington, 1s.; G. Dickinson, 1s.; A Friend, 1s.; R. Wood, 2s.; E. Smith, 1s.; A. Goodyer, 1s. *Per Miss Vance*:—S. Edmonds, 2s. 6d.; W. Leat, 1s.; R. Carroll, 5s.; W. Early, 2s. 6d.; H. Beach, 2s.; Mrs. Mann, 2s. 6d.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Parcel of clothing from Mrs. Mann.

E. P.—Glad to hear you were so highly pleased with Mr. Cohen's last lecture at the Athenæum Hall, and with Mr. Watts's last week's article. Certainly the question of advertising the *Freethinker*, and our movement generally, is a very important one. We are projecting a scheme with regard to the paper, which will probably soon be laid before the Secular party.

A. MILLAR.—We don't exactly know what you refer to. Perhaps there has been a miscarriage. Pleased to hear you think this journal gets brighter and brighter every week. There is a lot of work put into it, anyhow.

T. HOPKINS.—Pleased to have your humorous and encouraging letter. What is the enclosure for this time? You don't say.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your ever-welcome batches of cuttings.

H. PERCY WARD.—Thanks for your letter. We quite understand, but we don't choose to say anything unless in reply to a public statement.

UNKNOWN.—We are obliged to you for the two volumes by Saintsbury and Gosse.

ANDERSON, £1.

RESTRICTED.—Thanks for the enclosures, which we hope to use. Pleased to hear you were delighted with Mr. Joseph McCabe's lecture at Gateshead. Mr. Foote's long absence from the Tyneside has been owing to the difficulty in obtaining halls at Newcastle and South Shields. He is quite ready to visit the district under reasonable conditions, and much regrets that he has not been able to meet his friends there face to face.

C. H. CATTELL.—Mr. Foote will try to join the excursion to Stratford-on-Avon on Whit-Monday. He has the Conference report to see to, and no sub-editor now to help him. However, he will do his best to go with the Freethinkers to the birthplace and burial-place of the greatest Freethinker who ever lived.

GEORGE PORTER.—We hope to use it shortly. See also "Acid Drops."

S. BERRY.—Inserted as desired. If you want more space, let us know.

T. PERKINS.—If you have not already joined the N.S.S., you cannot take part in the Birmingham Conference; but if you come over from South Shields, and ask Miss Vance, the N.S.S. secretary, for a ticket to admit you to the back of the hall, you will be able to hear and see all that goes on. Of course Mr. Foote will shake hands with you with pleasure if you only introduce yourself.

A. E. ELDERKIN.—Well meant, but the time is not ripe for such a movement. Bringing inharmonious elements together would only result in greater confusion, and probably ill feeling. If you do not understand this now, we believe you will understand it in time. Jesus said "Blessed are the peacemakers," but he forgot to add that they would want a lot of sticking-plaster. We found this out long ago, and we prefer going on with our own work. At the same time, we cherish no animosities, but wish well to all who are fighting the common enemy—Priestcraft and Superstition.

F. J. GOULD.—The famous Paine quotation—"The world is my country, mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion"—occurs in the so-called third part of the *Age of Reason*, which is not included in some editions. It is towards the end, if we recollect aright; but we are too busy at the moment to hunt it up, though we will do so as soon as possible.

H. J.—Thanks for the reference. See "Acid Drops."

A. E. ELDERKIN.—We are obliged.

T. LANGFORD.—Your order is handed to our publisher, R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. Please sent to him direct in future.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Open Court—New York Truthseeker—Isle of Man Times—Public Opinion—Progressive Thinker—Blue Grass Blade—Ethical World—Free Society—Torch of Reason—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Two Worlds—Liberator—Crescent—Sydney Bulletin—People's Newspaper—Folkestone Herald—Secular Thought—Oxford Morning Echo—Birmingham Daily Mail—New Century—West Ham Herald.

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

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

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

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.

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.

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

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE'S lecture on "John Burns and Sunday Newspapers" was highly relished by the Athenæum Hall audience on Sunday evening. This evening (May 14) Mr. Foote occupies the same platform again, taking for his subject "The Czar's Love Feast; or, Christian War and Peace." This lecture ought to be heard by Christians as well as Freethinkers.

The Committee of the Birmingham Branch have now completed the arrangements for the N.S.S. Conference. As previously announced, the meetings are to be held in the Town Hall. Delegates, upon their arrival in Birmingham, are requested to proceed to the Victoria Hotel, John Bright-street, which is close to the North-Western and Midland Railway Stations, where they will find the reception committee in readiness to procure hotel accommodation for those who have not previously made arrangements.

A dinner will be provided (for a limited number who send in their names) on the Sunday at the Court Restaurant, Corporation-street, at a charge of 2s. 6d. each. A list of refreshment rooms open on Sunday, where cheap dinners and teas may be had, will also be obtainable from the Committee.

The evening meeting will be preceded by an Organ Recital by the City organist, solos will be sung by Mr. J. Matthews, and a Shakespearean reading will be given by Mr. A. Scrimshire. The side galleries will be reserved for members of the Branch and their friends; all other parts of the hall will be free to the public.

On Whit-Monday an excursion will be made to Stratford-on-Avon. Tickets (5s. each) will include railway fare, meat tea, and a boat trip. Arrangements have been made with the G.W.R. Co. for special coaches, and for the early return of those delegates who wish to leave Birmingham on Monday night. Friends who desire to avail themselves of this opportunity of visiting the birthplace of Shakespeare should send in their names at once to Mr. J. Partridge, 65 Cato-street,

Birmingham, who will give any further information required upon this or any other point in connection with the Conference.

Professor Büchner, whose death occurred at Darmstadt on Sunday, April 30, was born in that town on March 29, 1824. He had therefore attained to a fairly good old age. We only had the pleasure of meeting him once, at an International Freethought Congress in London many years ago. He was then a bright, alert, compact man, with a most pleasant gleam in his German eyes. He spoke in his native tongue, but now and then he interspersed a sentence in English. One of these was very effective. It was a quotation of Schopenhauer's *mot*, that "Religions are like glowworms, they require darkness to shine in."

Dr. Büchner was a prolific writer, but he is chiefly known as the author of *Force and Matter*. He was an out-and-out Atheist, and he let everybody know it. The first publication of his masterpiece in 1855 cost him his post in Tübingen. But he was not a man to be intimidated. He held on the even tenor of his way, preaching the gospel of Science, and doing brave battle with Superstition. A sure place is his in the history of intellectual progress.

After the Congress in London already referred to, Büchner paid a visit to Charles Darwin in company with Dr. Aveling. His visitors explained to the great Evolutionist why they called themselves Atheists. Darwin preferred to call himself an Agnostic, but after listening to them he said that their difference, after all, was rather one of method than one of ideas. He was with them in substance. We have heard that Dr. Büchner afterwards spoke of the extraordinary modesty and simplicity of Darwin's character. The intellectual giant had the heart of a child, and was almost incapable of giving or taking offence.

Colonel Ingersoll, it is reported, has figured as defendant in a civil suit in New York. His landlord sued him for 300 dollars damages on account of an injury to the nose of a bust of Charles Dickens. Colonel Ingersoll offered 30 dollars, or to supply a bust of St. Peter instead—so we presume his landlord is a Roman Catholic. When the Colonel was asked to take the oath he objected, saying that the Almighty ought not to be troubled with such a trumpety affair. They can't get "Bob" anyway.

"Justice marches," said Zola as he left France. Yes, and it is marching now with a vengeance. War Minister Freycinet is gone, and the Dupuy Cabinet is breaking up; the Generals and Colonels who persecuted poor Dreyfus are all in danger of prosecution or worse; the French nation is waking up to the real facts of the situation, and the gutter journalists of Paris—the Rocheforts, Drumonts, etc.—are looking terribly blue. The end is near.

The Liverpool Branch has arranged a syllabus of lectures to the end of June. Its hall will be closed during July and August. Mr. Bergmann addressed a good audience on Sunday evening.

Mr. W. Heaford had a large audience at Stratford Grove on Sunday evening. Mr. Stanley Jones speaks there this evening (May 14) at 7, on "Christianity and Other Religions." The West Ham Branch, formed as a result of the *Freethinker* agitation, meets every Thursday evening at 8 at 23 Eve-road. Mr. H. R. Sparkes is secretary, his address being 16 Woodgrange-road, Forest Gate.

The Camberwell Branch will be represented at the Birmingham Conference by two delegates—Messrs. Hartmann and Cottrell. This Branch held a very successful conversation on Sunday, closing the indoor meetings until October. Meanwhile the open-air propaganda will be carried on vigorously. Good audiences assemble at the new lecture station in Brockwell Park, which is the centre of a very hotbed of bigotry.

Mr. George Anderson's letter, in another column of this week's *Freethinker*, calls for a few words on our part. We should be sorry for anyone to think that Mr. Watts had been neglected. Directly we saw him on his return from America we perceived that he had been badly hit, that he was also financially straitened, and that something would have to be done to enable him to obtain the rest and ease of mind that were requisite to his recovery. We therefore sent out a private circular to a number of friends, asking for assistance to tide him over the difficulty caused by his illness; and the responses to that circular, including Mr. Anderson's generous contribution, have enabled us to hand over to him about £80. We stated in that circular that it was not our intention to refer to the matter in the *Freethinker*. Mr. Anderson, however, is a man of very generous impulses, and he thinks the matter should be carried further. We have done our own part, and are now under the necessity of stating it; but that is no reason why we should stand in the way of Mr. Anderson's supplementary effort,

The National Secular Society.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

TOWN HALL, BIRMINGHAM. *Whit-Sunday, May 27, 1899.*

AGENDA.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
2. Executive's Annual Report. By PRESIDENT.
3. Reception of Report.
4. Financial Report.
5. Election of President.
Motion by Birmingham and Finsbury Branches: "That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."
6. Election of Vice-Presidents.
(a) The following are nominated by the Executive for re-election: Dr. T. R. Allinson, George Anderson, E. Bate, Annie Brown, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, J. F. Dewar, R. Forder, J. Grange, T. Gorniot, S. Hartmann, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, W. Pratt, E. W. Quay, V. Roger, J. H. Ridgway, T. Robertson, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, Joseph Symes, S. R. Thompson, J. Umpleby, E. M. Vance, G. J. Warren, Charles Watts.
(b) Nominated for election by the Executive: Mr. James Neate.
(c) Nominated by Birmingham Branch: Mr. James Partridge.
7. Resolution *re* the death of Edward Truelove.
8. Resolution *re* the death of Professor Büchner.
9. Election of Honorary Secretary.
Motion by Executive: "That Mr. R. Forder be re-elected Honorary Secretary."
10. Election of Honorary Treasurer.
Motion by Executive: "That Mr. S. Hartmann be re-elected Honorary Treasurer."
11. Election of Auditors.
12. Statement *re* the Secular Society, Limited, by Mr. G. W. Foote.
13. Motion by Blackburn Branch:—
"That the Conference strongly impress from the Branches the importance of establishing Sunday Schools wherever possible."
14. Motion by the Executive:—
"That this Conference, being much pleased to hear that Mr. Joseph Symes hopes to visit England shortly, after so many years' absence at the Antipodes, hereby cordially invites him to come as soon as possible, and promises him that everything shall be done on the part of the British Secularists to make his visit pleasant and successful."
15. Motion by Mr. G. W. Foote:—
"That the Executive be instructed to take steps for the raising of a Twentieth Century Fund in connection with the Secular Movement in this country, in order that Freethought may be the better enabled to counteract the special efforts that are being made by the various Christian Churches; and that the Executive be further instructed to draft and publish a scheme of such a Fund with the least possible delay, so that the money may be collected during the present year."
16. Motion by the Executive:—
"That this Conference earnestly hopes that Secularists throughout the country will do their utmost to run and support 'Secular Education' candidates at School Board elections; feeling that this, and this alone, is the most practical way of breaking down the usurped position of Christianity in the educational system of this nation."

The morning sitting of the Conference will open at 10.30 and close at 12.30; the afternoon sitting will open at 2.30 and close at 4.30. Both are business meetings for members of the N.S.S. Outside Freethinkers may be admitted to the back of the hall by applying to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

A public meeting will be held in the large Town Hall at 7.30, when addresses will be delivered by Messrs. G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, C. Cohen, R. Forder, and others.
G. W. FOOTE, President.
R. FORDER, Hon. Sec.
E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

The Israelites' New Deity.

WHEN "the Lord" appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and proposed to send that individual back to Egypt as the leader and deliverer of the Israelites then in bondage, it is stated that "Moses said unto God: Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" (Exodus iii. 13.)

This was a perfectly natural, as well as a very pertinent, question; for the only difference between one local deity and another existed in the name. All the ancient gods professed to protect their own worshippers, and to give them assistance against the adorers of other rival deities; they all required to be propitiated by the "sweet savor" of animal sacrifice; they all had a number of priests who made known their will to the people; they all had sacred buildings dedicated to their service, with gold-covered arks and tables of incense; and last, but not least, they all demanded of their worshippers regular offerings. The name of the god, then, being of the first importance, it is interesting to note the answer to Moses' question. This is thus recorded:—

"And God said unto Moses, I am that I am..... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, YAHVEH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: *this is my name for ever..... I am Yahveh: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as El Shaddai, but by my name Yahveh I was not known to them.....* Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am Yahveh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians..... and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Exodus iii. 14, 15; vi. 2-7).

From the foregoing passages we learn (1) that the holy name "Yahveh" was now revealed for the first time, and was therefore previously unknown to the Israelites or to anyone else; (2) that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob only knew the Hebrew deity by the appellation El Shaddai, which is said to mean "God Almighty"; (3) that up to this time the Hebrew bondsmen had worshipped some other god, not necessarily El Shaddai; (4) that "the Lord" now took Israel as his people for the simple reason that they were descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who had offered sacrifice to him under his earlier cognomen.

It was doubtless very good of "the Lord" to take the Israelites under his protection, for that it was not Yahveh-Shaddai whom that people worshipped in Egypt is certain from the following passages in Joshua's address to a new generation of Hebrews at Shechem:—

"Now, therefore, fear Yahveh, and serve him in sincerity and truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt; and serve ye Yahveh..... Now, therefore, put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto Yahveh" (Joshua xxiv. 14, 23).

As already stated, it was very good of "the Lord" to select a nation of ignorant slaves and idolaters for his new worshippers, more especially since the subsequent conduct of that nation proves that he could not have chosen a more obstinate, rebellious, egotistical, immoral, or ungrateful people. At the same time, it cannot be denied that a deity who had any sense of justice would have revealed himself not to one nation only, but to the whole world, and would have given all mankind an equal chance of serving and obeying him. It is, however, a much by being excluded from the over-ruling providence of Yahveh; for the whole history of the Jews, from the earliest historical times to the present day, conclusively demonstrates the fact that the Hebrew god was utterly powerless to protect his chosen people. It is really pitiable to see the pious pleas which the sacred writers have felt called upon to offer in extenuation of the seeming helplessness of their new deity. As an example of this kind of misrepresentation, we may take the statement of the Chronicler concerning the death of king Saul. That veracious compiler says:—

"So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against Yahveh, because of the word of Yahveh which he kept not; and also for that he asked counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire thereby, and inquired not of Yahveh: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David, the son of Jesse" (1 Chronicles x. 13, 14).

If we look now at the earlier account in 1 Samuel, we shall see that the foregoing statement is a gross libel on king Saul. In this more historical version it is thus recorded:—

"And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And when Saul inquired of Yahveh, Yahveh answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her" (xxviii. 5, 6).

It was not until Saul found that Yahveh would give him no sign that he sought for one elsewhere. Saul did not forsake Yahveh; Yahveh forsook Saul. This conduct of the Jewish deity is not very surprising. The Israelites, on the occasion referred to, were so hopelessly outnumbered by the Philistines that "the Lord" (or his high priest, which is the same thing), knowing that victory would almost certainly incline to the side of the big battalions, found it prudent to withhold the sign. For the same reason the Hebrew god, on subsequent occasions, found himself unable to assist his worshippers against the Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs, the kings of Syria and Egypt, the Romans, and every other nation that in later times oppressed or persecuted his people.

Returning to the statement in Exodus, it would seem that the Lord no longer delighted in being addressed as El Shaddai, and so chose him a more appropriate name—one fuller in sound and a good mouth-opener—to wit, "Yahveh," an appellation never again to be changed. Possibly the Lord disliked the name Shaddai because that word in unpointed Hebrew denoted the "breasts" of a female, and such a title he considered somewhat effeminate for a great and warlike god, besides being decidedly womanish. It is not stated whether the Lord went by any other appellation before he assumed that of Shaddai; it is, however, clearly implied that he only changed his name once—from Shaddai to Yahveh—and that he was not one of the old local deities worshipped by some other nation who now appeared to Moses under an alias.

With regard to the Biblical statement that the Lord "appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as El Shaddai," we find that this is fully borne out in some of the narratives in Genesis, as will be seen by the following passages:—

xvii. 1.—"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am El Shaddai; walk before me, and be thou perfect," etc.

xxviii. 3.—Isaac, in blessing Jacob, said: "And El Shaddai bless thee, and make thee fruitful," etc.

xxxv. 11.—"And God said unto Jacob, I am El Shaddai: be fruitful and multiply," etc.

xlviii. 3.—"And Jacob said unto Joseph, El Shaddai appeared unto me at Luz, in the land of Canaan."

These passages, if they stood alone, would add confirmation to the statement in Exodus that the name "Yahveh" (translated "the Lord") was unknown to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But, unfortunately for the veracity of the sacred writer, we find from other narratives in Genesis that that holy name was known to all three patriarchs. Thus we read:—

xxiv. 3.—Abraham said to his servant: "I will make thee swear by Yahveh, the God of heaven and earth," etc.

xxiv. 42.—Abraham's servant prayed: "O Yahveh, the God of my master, Abraham," etc.

xxvii. 20.—Jacob, in answer to Isaac, said: "Because Yahveh, thy God, sent me good speed."

xxviii. 16.—"And Jacob awakened out of his sleep, and said, Surely Yahveh is in this place," etc.

Thus, if we give credence to the narratives in Genesis, the Lord's statement to Moses was a gratuitous falsehood. The name "Yahveh" was known to all the ancient patriarchs as early as the second generation from Adam (Genesis iv. 26). And, this being the case, Christian apologists have to come to the assistance of their Lord. These perverters tell us that the writer of Exodus (who, they assert, was Moses) did not mean that the name "Yahveh" was unknown to the pre-Mosaic patriarchs; he merely meant that the character of that deity had not then been revealed. There were, according to these unscrupulous reconcilers, some special attributes or aspects of character connected with the name Yahveh which did not belong to that of El Shaddai. This is pure, unadulterated misrepresentation, and is shown to be such by Moses' question to the Lord: "Behold, when I come to the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, *What is his name? what shall I say unto them?*" It was not the character of the God of which Moses desired to be informed, but the name of the deity who was about to

take the Israelites under his protection ; for that legislator could not know by instinct which of the many gods worshipped by man was then speaking to him.

Concerning this change of name several explanations have been given. The following is the simplest and the most probable: the writer of this portion of Exodus (who lived many centuries after the Israelites had settled in Canaan) had before him the narratives in Genesis in which the Lord tells Abraham and Jacob he was named El Shaddai. From these passages it would naturally be inferred that the Jewish god Yahveh was a new deity, quite distinct from Shaddai. Hence, the writer, desiring to identify the national god of the Hebrews with the Shaddai of the patriarchs, represented the Jewish deity as informing Moses of his change of name. In this way, everyone would understand that the Israelites had not forsaken the god of their forefathers ; that deity had simply taken a new name.

As a matter of fact, however, Shaddai and Yahveh were *not* one and the same god, nor was either originally a Hebrew deity. These facts can be conclusively demonstrated ; space will, however, allow but the following sample of the evidence.

The ancient Phœnicians, Syrians, and Hebrews were of the same race and language as the inhabitants of Assyria, and came originally from beyond the Euphrates. The exact date of their settlement in Canaan is unknown, but the fact is certain. These tribes carried with them the gods they had formerly worshipped, and some of the literature of the countries from which they had emigrated. To quote the words of Professor Sayce : "The names of Babylonian deities meet us again in Palestine and the adjoining Semitic lands. Nebo, the Babylonian god of prophecy and literature, has given his name to towns that stood within the territories of Reuben and Judah, as well as the Moabite mountain on which Moses breathed his last ; Anu, the Babylonian god of heaven, and his female consort Anatu, re-appear in Beth-Anath, 'the temple of Anatu,' and Anathoth, the birth-place of Jeremiah ; and Sinai itself is but the mountain of Sin, the Babylonian Moon-god." To these may be added the Accadian goddess Ishtar, which became the Canaanitish Ashtor-eth ; the Babylonian sun-god Shamas, which gave the name to Beth-shemesh ; the Chaldean god Bel, which was worshipped under the title of Baal, and several others. Among the latter may be mentioned the Accadian sea-god, Ea, the god of supreme intelligence. The last-named deity is our old friend "the Lord," whose name originally was not Yahveh, but Yah (ee-ah). The latter appellation is still preserved in many passages in the Hebrew scriptures which have apparently escaped revision. The following are examples :—

Psalms lxxviii. 4.—"His name is Yah, exult ye before him."

Psalms lxxvii. 11.—"I will make mention of the deeds of Yah."

Psalms xciv. 7.—"And they say, Yah shall not see."

Psalms cxviii. 5.—"Out of my distress I called upon Yah."

The word "Hallelujah" ("Praise ye Yah"), which occurs in the Psalms more than twenty times, is another notable example.

We find, further, that in early times Yah was worshipped by several nations in and around Canaan, and was never the God of the Israelites only. The Hebrews added a syllable to his name either to hide his identity or to have a deity they could call their own.

As to the god Shaddai, this imaginary deity was no other than the Babylonian god Bel, who in some of the inscriptions is addressed as *Shaddai Rabu*, "the Exalted One." Hence Shaddai becomes identified with Baal. We have thus a clear proof both of the mythical character of the Hebrew god, and of the systematic fraud practised by the Jewish sacred writers. We have also an additional proof, if any were needed, that the stories of the ten plagues, and all the other miraculous occurrences ascribed to the bogus deity, Yah-Shaddai, are fictitious. It is not astonishing, then, that this mythical god was powerless to assist or protect his new people ; but it is somewhat surprising that that people has, for over two millenniums, and through the most terrible persecutions, remained firm in their allegiance to such an impotent Croquemitaine.

ABRACADABRA.

Let 'Em All Come.

"LET 'em all come," Anarchists, Socialists, Free Lovers, Green-backers, Free-Coinage-of-Silverites—yea, let the whole host of ists, isms, and ers come, and welcome; there is room enough, and to spare, for them all. As so many proofs of mental activity we Secularists really mean it when we say: "Let 'em all come." For just what protoplasm is to animal and vegetable life, what sensation is to perception, so is mental activity to Secularism. Freedom of thought, freedom of utterance upon every subject, constitute the very life of Secular polity, and may justly be claimed as its great distinguishing factor in the world of ists, isms, and ers. But when they arrive they will find Secularism already here and at work, with a clearly-defined object to stimulate them (the Secularists) to the accomplishment of their self-imposed task ; and, likely enough, so very busy at their work as to have no time, if even they have the will, to listen to, much less to join, any of the votaries of those ists, isms, or ers, in their respective panaceas for social or political maladies. Let those votaries remember that freedom of expression is one thing, whilst compulsion to listen is quite another. By keeping this last item well in mind the preachers of those differing creeds will not be so likely to lose their tempers when they find that Secularists are too much impressed with the importance of their own special work, in the sphere of human progress, to allow their resources, mental or financial, to be diverted from its accomplishment ; as some of them now do when they find that Secularists decline point blank to allow their press or their platform to become a medium for the circulation of their respective programs. In common with many other Secularists, I am most strenuously opposed to several of those phases of thought, but not at all to their freest expression and widest circulation. We contend that we are well within the limits of our just rights in declining to help in the spreading of doctrines to which we are thoroughly opposed.

Yes, "Let 'em all come," and welcome ; but let them not forget that Secularism is a definite system of polity which has been productive of great, useful, and enduring work in the service of mankind—work that has benefitted those who opposed it far more than those who did it, and which is even now of more service to its enemies than to its friends. As a direct result of the purely destructive work of Secularism, the most intelligent section of religionists, whilst they have quietly dropped the most objectionable characteristics of their respective creeds, are nonetheless in the full enjoyment of all the most pleasurable features of their erstwhile gloomy doctrines ; thus, whilst they are all quite sure of their being booked for glory and joy eternal as a result of their faith in the Bible, yet are they, for the most part, without the slightest fear of endless torment, despite the fact that, according to the Bible, they are far more likely to have to endure the latter than to enjoy the former.

Yes, "Let 'em all come," and let them realise that the success of Secularism is essential to any of their remedies for human ills having a fair trial ; for, while the vast majority of mankind firmly believe in another life that is to last for ever, they are not very likely to concern themselves much about this little *gasp*. Now, some of those who have come, and have done good work in the Secular camp, have lost heart in the cause because, to their minds, we, as a party, do not accomplish enough. They grow weary of the everlasting pulling down. They would fain go in for a turn of building up ; and when they find that nobody, or next to nobody, in the party joins them in their constructive projects, they rush off to join the nearest branch of the S.D.F., in the ranks of which they can hear plenty about building up, though they see no more done than they did amongst us. But in almost all such cases those weary ones are lost to the Secular party for good.

Were our Secular constructionists to look the simple facts of the case squarely in the face, they would at once realise that in this matter they are only trying to play the rôle of the fifth wheel of the coach ; for in politics, in sociology—from the temperance to the population

question—our services, as Secularists, are neither required nor desired. I have often smiled up my sleeve when listening to those weary ones expatiating on the shortcomings of Secularism in this connection. Any total stranger to our movement, listening to their remarks, would naturally infer that the N.S.S. must be a most wealthy and powerful Association, lacking nothing but the intelligence and energy to enable it to at once straighten all that is crooked the wide world over. That the vast majority of the people are enabled by their education to utilise to the full a vast and easily accessible literature, dealing in the most comprehensive manner with every branch of knowledge; that there is an institution called Parliament, composed of Commons, Lords—spiritual and temporal—and Monarch, whose function is to do all the national building up or pulling down, making new laws, mending or ending old ones, seems to be of no importance to our would-be constructionists in their diagnosis of Secular ability and national requirements. If the great and well-drilled Liberal party is, as we know it is, utterly powerless in this matter, where can the power of the N.S.S. come in?

Just as many dear children are lost to the world through their not being strong enough to pass through the ordeals of teething, measles, or other complaints of childhood, so are many very promising children lost to the Secular cause through lack of strength to pass through this phase of thought that is involved in the building-up idea. Some young Freethinkers try their hand at constructing, and, by the futility of their own efforts in this direction, have been led to devote themselves to the opposite phase, and eventually developed into thorough-going iconoclasts. Our worthy President of the N.S.S., if he will allow me to say so, in his Free-thought childhood made a gallant effort to lay the foundation of the English Republic by the inaugurating of a Republican club. His great predecessor, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, despite his great work as an Atheist propagandist, was nevertheless a most ardent political reformer, as the name of his journal, the *National Reformer*, plainly indicated. But Charles Bradlaugh the Atheist will live in history long after his great political services to his country are buried in oblivion. Thomas Paine the infidel is known the world over; but Thomas Paine the great Republican politician is but little known to the crowd. In human progress, as in human industry, we have a far greater division of labor in our times than was the case in Thomas Paine's day; hence our power to devote ourselves solely to the Secular movement.

In Mr. Bradlaugh's early days, and very much more so in Mr. Paine's day, to be a *somebody* one needed to be a something in well nigh everything; whereas, in our day, the dabbler in everything would prove a *somebody* in nothing. This is just as true of societies as of individuals. In the modern world of thought the professor of everything in general would be regarded, and in most cases rightly so, as the possessor of nothing in particular, and would be just as much out of joint with the times as would a jack-of-all-trades and master of none in our world of modern industry, wherein the greatest possible division of all kinds of labor is the order of the day. In brief, specialism is the distinguishing characteristic of our age, and seems to be essential to success in anything.

Considering that the possibility of effective organised effort by the opponents of religion is but a thing of yesterday, comparatively speaking, and that *moral suasion* is their only force, alike of cohesion amongst themselves and of attack upon the bulwarks of superstition, we, as Freethinkers, who have taken, and are now taking, any part in that effort have every reason to be proud of having done our parts in the work that has been accomplished. To-day the avowed Atheist is a fully-recognised citizen, not only in our courts where the laws are enforced, but also in that still higher court where those laws are enacted—facts, though only two in number, speaking whole volumes in favor of the success of organised Freethought effort. Blind indeed must those good Freethinkers be who, in the iconoclastic work of organised Secularism, can see nothing but the flogging of a dead horse. True, the ferocious tiger that religion once was has been transformed into a costly white elephant. But this is no reason why we should cease to labor for the final extinction of the worse than

useless brute. In its former aspect the pioneers of Secularism allowed the monster no rest. Shall we be less active in the good work now that its power for mischief is so greatly curtailed? No; a thousand times no.

T. J. THURLOW.

The Wreck of the "Stella."

I saw it not, no kith or kin
Fell by thy hand abhorred,
But still the scene of thy deadly sin
Haunts my sad heart, O Lord.

The cheerless sky, the crawling mist,
The bitter ocean grey,
Where murderous rocks low lurk and list
In ambush for their prey.

The good ship sweeping to her doom,
The crash, the wild despair,
The hideous and certain tomb
Mocking the futile prayer.

Woe is it now for man and wife,
And plighted man and maid,
For death is the price of a dear one's life,
And heroes the price have paid!

O, the anguish of that parting kiss,
That passionate good-bye!
It breaks my heart, such dole as this,
'Tis Hell to love—and die!

Yet these ere this had pondered Death,
Till, now he drew anear,
The impact of his icy breath
Wrought sorrow, but not fear?

But the blessed children, heart's delight,
Whose meed is love and mirth!
Life's dearest gift, more sweet and bright
Than the radiant flowers of Earth—

The little ones! whose helplessness,
Like an almighty prayer,
Moves us to cherish, shield, and bless
Their lives of gossamer!

These, too, thy rancorous hate demands;
O God, I see them plain!
Wee struggling forms, and baby hands
That beat the waves in vain!

Wee loved ones, piteously pale,
Gasp in the choking brine!
I feel their pangs, I hear their wail;
Their terrors, Lord, are mine.

Did no soft memory arise
Of the days when thou wert child,
That thou couldst watch with callous eyes
Their death-throes in the wild?

Hast thou forgot thy words of wail
O'er the bairns thou didst caress?
Or didst thou feign sweet love to feel,
And but pretend to bless?

O, human hearts are often hard,
And oft with anger swayed;
But they are seldom locked and barred
When children knock for aid!

And streaming human eyes there be
When Death has walked the wave;
Human the cry, "O God! had we
Been there with power to save!"

Now out upon thee, hateful God!
Where was thy love divine?
High as the heavens o'er top the sod,
Man's love transcendeth thine.

Moloch thou art and Juggernaut
In loathsome form combined,
A monster of foul deed and thought,
By maniacs called kind.

Come, let my portion be the Pit—
Think'st thou with thee I'd dwell?
Though in thy Book my name be writ,
Send me, damned God, to Hell!

Sweeter to live long years of pain
Than sing with slaves above
The fulsome, false, eternal strain
That hails thee Lord of Love.

Better to suffer Hell's eclipse
Than a Fiend to glorify,
Despair at heart, and on these lips
An everlasting lie!

EX-RITUALIST.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote "The Czar's Love Feast."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, Lyric Musical Comedy Company, "A Day in Boulogne."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 16 New Church-road): Every Saturday, at 7, Debating Class. Sunday, at 7.30, A lecture.

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road): 8, W. Heaford.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford, E.): 7, F. B. Kirkman, B.A., "Needed Reforms in Secondary Education."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Robespierre." 8.15, Robert Owen Celebration.

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11, Stanton Coit, "Robespierre."

WEST LONDON BRANCH (15 Edgware-road): May 15, at 9, special meeting to consider Conference Agenda.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. Ramsey.

BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): A. B. Moss—3.15, "A New Bible"; 6.30, "His Majesty the Devil."

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, G. Standing.

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, S. E. Easton.

FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and Common Sense."

HAMMERSMITH (The Grove): 7.15, E. Pack.

HAMPSTEAD HEATH (Jack Straw's Castle): 3.15, E. Pack.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, E. Pack.

KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, E. White.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford; 7, W. Heaford. May 17, at 8, S. Jones.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, R. P. Edwards.

THE TRIANGLE (Salmon Lane, Limehouse): 11.30, E. White. May 16, at 8, A lecture.

S. L. E. S. (Peckham Rye): 11.15, Mr. Potter.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, A lecture.

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, H. Courtney, "Faiths: Old and New."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): J. M. Robertson—11, "Imperialism v. Social Reform"; 3, "What to Read"; 7, "Christianity and Character."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Sunday-school Anniversary—Cantata, "Queen of the Seasons."

DERBY BRANCH (Central Hotel, Market-place): 7, W. H. Whitney, "The Philosophy of Egoism."

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 6.30, Mr. Macwaters, "The Sabbatarian Superstition Exposed."

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Business meeting; 6.30, "Celsus," "Ipané."

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row): 7, Violin Selections by Professors Elliot and Ray; 7.15, J. W. de Vaux, J.P., "Adam and the Creation Story."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Robert Owen: His Life and Ideas."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, M. L. Bergmann, B.Sc., "World Evolution."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): C. Cohen—11, in Secular Hall, "Morality without Religion"; 3, in Alexandra Park (near flag pole), An address; 7, in Secular Hall, "What would Jesus Do?" Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Messrs. O'Brien and McCutcheon, Discussion on "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Machinery to Man."

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

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—May 14, Manchester; 21, Birmingham Conference.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—May 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 14, Northampton.

R. P. EDWARDS, 52 Bramley-road, Notting-hill.—May 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.—May 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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