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PRICE TWOPENCE.

How Lipton Prayed.

YACHTING is better sport than fighting. It is not such a delirious form of excitement as shooting and being shot at, but it leaves a less pernicious reaction. Moreover, it is less destructive while it lasts. It does not cost millions of money, and it has no special tendency to make widows and orphans. What the great Atlantic liner is to commerce and travel, the yacht is to pure lovers of the sea. Man's highest achievement, taking it all round, is a ship. It embodies all his resources and all his daring. The masters of the sea have generally been the masters of the world. And the yacht is the ship built for pleasure, with an eye to grace and dexterity, as the racehorse is bred for elegance and swiftness. What a lovely spectacle it is, heeling over in a fine breeze, under a gallant spread of sail! Like a living thing, like a great bird, it flies along, and wheels as it tacks. It seems to feel delight as it cuts through the water, and flings back the spray, and throws behind it the wash of waves; and the brave pennon is its challenge to the wind. Never may love of yachting—whether in a big craft that takes forty to sail her, or in a tiny craft built for two—die out of the heart of Englishmen, or of their cousins across the Atlantic. It is a sign of the blood of their race. And may the two nations contend with each other in this sport for any number of generations. Bad blood is not bred whoever wins. The loser to-day may be the winner to-morrow. Rivalry need not be sour and malicious; it may be sweet and generous, and good for the victor and the vanquished.

It must be allowed that the New Yorkers, and a lot of other Americans who could get into the big city, are showing a tremendous interest in the great Cup Race. Perhaps it is a welcome distraction from the wretched Philippine business. Nevertheless, their interest is obviously genuine. Proportionate interest is also displayed on this side of the Atlantic. We say *proportionate*, because the race is being sailed over there and not in English waters; and distance, while it lends enchantment to the view, is apt to diminish interest when the view is so far off as to be invisible. We all congratulate Sir Thomas Lipton on his emergence from mere grocerdom into the position of an international character. He is adding to the gaiety of nations. He is also helping to keep up the good understanding between Great Britain and America. One advantage of great wealth is, that only a very wealthy man can do these things. It will probably be a long time before the London County Council builds a yacht to sail against one built by the Municipality of New York. A rich man with plenty of enterprise was wanted, and Sir Thomas Lipton offered himself cheerfully. No expense was spared, the *Shamrock* was turned out by the best skill on this side, and she is evidently a boat that will take a deal of beating. Sir Thomas means to "lift the Americans if he can, and we hope he will succeed. The Americans will then have to come over here to fetch it;

they in turn will taste of our hospitality, and thus we shall get to know and like each other better.

But now comes the sad part of the affair. The wind seems to have emigrated from the scene of the boat race. Three times the yachts have sailed in vain. Boreas refused to blow, and the result was a trio of drifting matches. The fourth time there was no wind at all, and not even a start could be effected. Nothing like it was ever seen before. The race has been declared off for want of wind on previous occasions, and once might be expected at this time of the year, but when it comes to four times in succession, we begin to exclaim "there's witchcraft in it."

Well, we believe we have got to the bottom of the mystery. It seems to be all Sir Thomas Lipton's fault. He has been worrying the Lord, who appears to have turned crusty. The day before the second drifting match Sir Thomas was interviewed, and expressed his delight at the prediction of brisk weather on the morrow. "I am glad," he said, "to-morrow will be windy. I prayed for rain; in fact, I prayed more in the last month than in any previous year of my life." Perhaps he had nothing particular to pray for during those previous years, and the Lord was a bit incensed at his negligence. Perhaps he prayed too hard when he began, and the Lord was annoyed at his sudden importunity. Perhaps he prayed all by himself, and the Lord was angry at his not engaging the services of one or more professional beseechers. Something is wrong anyhow, and Sir Thomas should see to it, for the situation is quite critical. May we suggest that he should try the opposite method? They say that dreams go by contraries, and it may be that the same is true of prayers. Suppose the variation is tried of praying for a calm day. There might be plenty of wind then. We do not say there would be, but the experiment is worth trying.

Of course it is conceivable that God—we mean Sir Thomas Lipton's god—is shocked at being appealed to at all on behalf of a sporting affair. Judging from the Bible, he is a terribly serious personage. His brows are always well bent in the Old Testament, and he is not much better in the New Testament. Jesus himself wept, but it is not recorded that he ever smiled. The Lord does not mind being approached in relation to a fight. The priests on both sides pray for victory when a war is going on, and they tell us that he keeps both ears open on such occasions. It is said, too, that paternal prayers helped the pugilist who knocked out Fitzsimmons. But these are not laughing affairs, and the Lord does not like laughing. Look at his most devoted servants if you think otherwise. Watch their long and solemn faces. See their faint smiles, when they do smile, like moonlight on a muddy pool. And what they are the Lord is likely to be on a larger scale. On the whole, then, it is just possible that Sir Thomas Lipton spoiled the racing himself. He drew the Lord's attention to the matter, and the Lord determined to stop such frivolity.

G. W. FOOTE.

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The Nature and Value of Truth.

WHAT is truth? This question has been frequently asked, and the answers given have varied according to the opinions entertained by those who replied. In a general way, truth has been described as the supreme principle to be adored by mankind; the self-persuasive power to which all should submit, and the one thing that never totally disappears from among the nations of the world. It has been compared to a rock on which all that is permanent must rest. It is possessed of self-sustaining power. It is universal and invulnerable; for, as Milton observed, "who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" Truth may be defined as the conformity of ideas with the nature of real things. It is thus a contrast with conjecture, opinion, and belief, which are conditions of the mind being tossed about on the waves of change, fashion, and intellectual variations.

It is commonly held that there are different kinds of truth as well as different modes of apprehending it. But it should be remembered that the variety does not refer to truth *per se*, which, in its essence, is always the same. The difference lies in the form it assumes and the subjects to which it refers. For instance, the truth claimed for Roman Catholicism is not the same as that claimed by Protestants. Neither is the alleged truth of orthodoxy of the same character as that taught by Secularism. The differences that obtain as to what is truth arise from the fact that men's faculties vary; and, inasmuch as they are not infallible, uniformity of opinion upon this, as upon other subjects, is not possible. In so-called spiritual or religious matters conscience is supposed to decide what is true. But here again universal agreement is impossible, simply because conscience (which is the result of birth, education, and general environment) differs both in men and nations. Moreover, when a man acts "according to conscience," it does not follow that he does that which is right. History informs us that the greatest absurdities have been believed, and the severest acts of cruelty have been performed, by those who were actuated by "conscientious motives."

Probable truth embraces that which may be reasonably made the subject of belief. What we mean by belief in this case is, that we regard a certain proposition to be true. That which we dignify by the name of truth should in all cases arise out of rational thought, and argument sustained by evidence. Authoritative truth must, no doubt, in some instances, be accepted by most men; but this caution should always be observed—never give to authority the reverence due to truth. We are, however, quite justified in accepting on authority anything the truth of which is highly probable, or which is impossible to doubt. But the majority of beliefs, particularly those of a theological nature, in various nations show that this criterion has not been applied. Beliefs enter the minds of children through the agency of their parents, and are adopted by adults either through education, or being content with the teachings imparted to them in childhood and youth without requiring any proof of the truth of what was taught them. This fact will explain to some extent why it is that beliefs in palpable absurdities prevail, and why reason is never brought to bear upon those speculative questions which are enunciated from age to age. Hence, among believers in theology two conditions of mind are frequently found. The one is lack of agreement in opinion upon the part of those who think, and the other is general agreement among those who seldom think at all. There is an apparent similarity between ignorance and darkness, the eye of the mind, and the eye of the body. All things seem alike in the darkness, however they may differ when viewed in daylight. So it is to the ignorant mind; there is an absence of that variety and charm which are recognised by those whose intellects are well stored with useful knowledge.

What we regard as the highest truth, if we may be allowed distinctions, is obtained by the scientific method, which may be said to consist only of verified knowledge. Such truth is concerned not only with nature that is, but also with "the how" of existing things, the powers they possess, their relation to each other and to us. When these important facts become known to, and are acted

upon, by the general masses, they will form the basis of social order, the lever by which society may be elevated; for, without such knowledge and its application, man's well-being can never be secured. The value of the scientific method in the building-up of social truth will be perceived at once by those who have discovered that the conditions of life determine the character of society. This is another advantage of Secular philosophy to be added to the many which we have from time to time given in these columns. It urges that the true remedy for existing evils is to be found, not in any of the theological systems of the world, but in the discovery and proper application of natural laws. It is the energies of man, and not the will of God, upon which we, as Secularists, rely for the salvation of our race. The scientific method of inquiry after truth, and the verification of it, now happily permeate nearly all advanced studies. It appears to us quite impossible that the cruel superstitions, the barbarous institutions, and the sanguinary laws of the past could have existed if the scientific spirit had obtained and had been adopted. But Christianity always opposed this natural panacea for human wrongs, preferring to trust to alleged supernatural means; and the present miserable state of society is the result.

Truth, as already defined, has the superior advantage of being confined to no one nation, party, or creed. It is the virtue of humanity on every soil and in every climate, and its only exactions are that it shall be sought for with diligence and courage, and, when found, observed without any reserve as to consequences. As regards popular views of theology, its adherents have too often evaded truth unless it was thought to be useful in maintaining their own opinions. Some honest persons have ideas which they cherish with affection, and they dread submitting them to the scientific test, in case that, by so doing, the fallacy of those ideas should be discovered. It is the pride of ignorance which maintains the indefensible, and often prevents the confession of error. Thus, where personal interests or religious prejudices are involved, truth frequently has to suffer. There is, however, some hope that, through the progress of the principles of Freethought, some means will be found whereby truth shall be rescued from the snares, the errors, and the machinations of theology. It should not be forgotten that opinions may express a veracity of mind, although they are not in accordance with facts. Truth can only be established by that which is accurate and capable of demonstration, while opinion is conjecture based upon what may, or may not, be within the range of demonstration. Most popular opinions are simply prejudices, the outcome of habit made venerable by time; and, when truth interferes with them, it is looked upon as an innovation—a disturber of the peace—at which the timid are alarmed. The dread of new truths is found mostly among men who are unaccustomed to reasoning, and incapable of the severe mental strain that the understanding of the nature of an argument involves.

The fact is, the study of scientific truth requires the serious application of all our faculties and the cultivation of the art of reasoning. Huxley once said that science is organised common sense, but it is something superior to the common sense of the market place. It is the result of thought, reflection, and persistent investigation. It may be contended that it is only the highly intellectual who can appreciate the scientific study of truth, and that genius is born with man, not acquired by him. To some extent, no doubt, this is true; but it is also certain that it was necessary for Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, Newton, and other great minds, to methodically study, in order to enable them to give the world their mighty thoughts in the best form. Bacon, in his essay on "Truth," quotes some unnamed ancient poet as saying that no pleasure is comparable to standing on the vantage ground of truth, where the air is clear and serene. This is so, therefore we are pleased to recognise that the belief is growing, that truth is the "one thing needful" to a happy and progressive life. It may for a time be obscured, but we can say in the language of Bryant:—

Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;

But Error, wounded, writhes with pain,
And lies among his worshippers.

CHARLES WATTS.

God Help Us!

Two men were out in a small boat during a storm. They had almost made land, but the chances of getting through the breakers safely seemed small. "Oh God," prayed one, "carry us safely to the shore, and we will never forget thy kindness." "Hold on," said the other, as the boat's keel struck the beach; "hold on, don't be under an obligation to anyone—we're ashore." This story puts the philosophy of "God help us!" in a nutshell. It expresses to a nicety both the occasion and the helplessness of the exclamation. No man, be he ever so religious, invokes God while there is a prospect of help in other directions. No one trusts in Providence who can get credit elsewhere. No one drags in the name of God, as an explanation, until human knowledge has reached its limits. "God help you!" says one when the time for calling in an undertaker has arrived; "God only knows!" says another when human knowledge is at fault; always and everywhere, in civilised and in uncivilised times, the phrase "God" stands as an asylum for ignorance, the phrase which seeks to narcotise the consciousness of its own weakness.

What knowledge does the term "God" convey to anyone? Absolutely none. No one gains anything by its presence, no one loses anything by its absence. To say that God produced a thing tells us nothing, explains nothing. It is a mere phrase, a collection of words, "sound and fury, signifying nothing." An explanation only exists when the thing to be explained is linked to other aspects or objects of human experience; when it is shown to be a necessary link in the chain of universal causation. But God is a term that has no logical connection with anything that has gone before, or with anything that is to come after; it is like the Irishman's footless stocking without a leg, a mark of the absence of knowledge rather than an indication of its presence.

Why should we believe that God will help us? Certainly not because experience justifies the belief. Under all the varying circumstances of life people have trusted to God to help, and have been disappointed. In times of shipwreck, and in seasons of famine, when disease has laid its grisly hand on the face of society, or when fire has threatened the safety of life and property by its ravages, the same appeals have been made, the same trust exhibited, and always with the one result. During the times when plagues swept over Europe with revolting frequency, prayers were said, processions were formed, whole nations prostrated themselves before God, and with what result? The God to whom they prayed was as dumb and as unresponsive as the plague itself was pitiless. It was not the help of God that diminished any of these evils. It was the non-godly methods of science which, by studying the conditions of health, paved the way for the extinction of disease; and, by developing the intellect of man, taught him to become the arbiter of his own fate. When, some years ago, a deputation approached Lord Aberdeen and asked that the Government should appoint a day of national prayer and humiliation in order to get rid of small-pox, Aberdeen's reply was: "Look after your drains." It was a vivid contrast of the old method and the new—old method regarding all disease as the expression of God's anger, and its removal a matter of his grace; and the new tracing all disease to purely natural conditions, and the condition of its removal to improved sanitation and more cleanly living.

Why should we, even from the Christian point of view, expect God to help us? To overcome the difficulties of life, we are told. Yes; but who created the difficulties? where did they come from? Clearly, if there be a God, the difficulties are his creation; and why should we expect him to remove difficulties he has himself created? If God really wished to help us, would he not have helped us better by refraining from bringing into existence the very difficulties he now being implored to remove? And if he did not, or would not, do so at the beginning, why should we believe that he will act otherwise now? Is the world merely the scene of a huge theatrical performance, at which an almighty conjurer displays his skill by first of

all creating difficulties and demolishing them afterwards? If God does all things well, to ask for help in the face of difficulties created by himself is ridiculous; and, if otherwise, the help must come from man himself, not from an impotent or careless deity.

Who is there believes that God does help? The clergy. True, they say so; but then it is their business to say so, and there is no more in clergymen saying they believe that than there is in Beecham making the same statement concerning his pills. We may grant that God helps them, or the belief in him, which amounts to the same thing, does, since it is difficult to see where else in the modern world mediocrity could secure such comfortable positions as are to be obtained in the various Churches. But do even the clergy trust in God while help is to be obtained elsewhere? Every now and again one reads that the Rev. Dr. Dash and the Rev. Mr. Blank are away in the South of France or in Switzerland recruiting their health? Why not stop at home? Do they believe that the "great Physician" lives exclusively in these localities, and only receives patients at his own residence? A Secularist says: "Don't trust in God for health; get change of scene, fresh air, rest, and thus give nature a chance to build up your wasted energies." The parson says: "Beloved, if you are sick, pray to the Lord, and trust that he will cure you in his own good time"; and, on the first sign of disease in his own body, rushes off to the seaside, into the country, or to the continent, and asks the poor dupes at home, who supply the funds, to pray for his recovery. Minus the hypocrisy of the parson, what is the difference between his conduct and that of the Secularist?

And how glibly the phrase, "The protecting providence of God," rolls off the lips of the average parson. A Scotch elder once excused himself from attending the harvest thanksgiving, after an exceptionally bad season, on the ground that he had no wish to approach the Lord in a spirit of sarcasm. The ordinary cleric is deterred by no such consideration. To him the phrase is but one of the many platitudes by the aid of which the mind of the people is bent to their will. And so they prate of the protecting providence of God, while all around, in city and village, on sea and land, in plague, pestilence, famine, and disease, man receives countless illustrations of how callous to his cries nature really is, and of what little help he can hope for apart from his own intelligence and industry.

But if the clergy show by their conduct that they have no faith in God's help, are the laity any more convinced on this subject? I have seen plenty of houses with the motto, "The Lord watches over this house," liberally displayed, and have found the occupiers equally liberal in the attention they bestowed on burglar alarms and watch-dogs. The lesson of experience tells on them more even than on the clergy. They turn to the doctor, the statesman, the scientist, for assistance or advice on all occasions of distress or difficulty; God is never invoked except with a sinking of the heart and a moral conviction that all is over. And when success crowns his efforts, the layman is far less ready to give the credit to God than is the parson. He feels that, after all, his own perseverance and intelligence have had something to do with the production of the result, and often says so. "Providence was very good to you, Donald," said a minister to one who had managed to swim ashore from a Scotch lake after his boat had been capsized. "Yes," said Donald, thoughtfully; "yes, Providence was very good, but I was very clever too."

Of course, if God did help, it would not be a bad thing, and just now there is a splendid opportunity for him to exert his influence. What with political disturbances all over the continent, hurricanes in the West Indies, plagues in India, and threatened war in South Africa, one could hardly conceive a more opportune occasion for God Almighty lending a hand. He might conveniently protect his faithful followers, the Boers, from being gobbled up by their powerful neighbors, or induce these neighbors, who are also his followers, to desist from a policy of grab. Perhaps, however, in this particular instance he is in a dilemma. In the case of the late Soudanese trouble the matter was simple. Here the combatants belonged to rival religions, and God might be safely trusted to lend his influence to the followers of his "only begotten son"—

especially when they happened to have the better organisation and more powerful guns.

True, this last consideration is weakened somewhat by the recollection that in the Greco-Turkish war he levelled up matters by allowing the Mohammedan to lick the Christian; but, be that as it may, the South African affair, from the Lord's point of view, is a poser. The Boers are most devout followers of the Bible—for which the British public calls them fools; and the English are also followers of the same book—after a fashion. What is the Lord, whom Martin Luther called "half-witted," to do under such circumstances? To turn his back on the Boers is to strike a blow at his own book. To forsake the English—perish the thought. What would heaven be like in the absence of Englishmen? Do not Englishmen claim paramount influence even there? All that is required to make it so is to send off a number of resident agents, and I suggest the clergy as fittest for the post. And so, all things concerned, God seems inclined to follow a sitting-on-the-fence kind of policy. "Let each side fight it out; I will be on the side that wins"—as usual.

The plain fact is that God does not help those who cannot help themselves, and those who can do not require his assistance. In all man's doubts and difficulties, in all his trials and troubles, man finds no help from God; that has to come from his own strength of mind and body, or from the labors of his fellows. In helplessness and ignorance was the cry born; in helplessness and ignorance it find sits chief support to-day. And because of this the world still finds itself oppressed by the weight of demoralising creeds, and of rapacious and retrogressive priesthoods. These are the real dangers from which we might well pray to be released; for while our minds are oppressed by religious fear, and our national life more or less controlled by the Black Army, "God help us," indeed.

C. COHEN.

The Dreyfus Affair and the Church.

ASSUREDLY the Dreyfus affair has been primarily a tragedy—a terrible tragedy for the unhappy victim, a still graver tragedy for France; but, like all tragedies, it has had plenty of comedy interspersed in it, and it has furnished abundant opportunity for outside hypocrisies. For much of the indignation in other countries has been shockingly cheap. Thus, though the demonstration was, no doubt, primarily inspired by the best motives, there was something grotesque in the spectacle of the Hyde Park crowd assembling to condemn injustice in France at the very moment that their own country was on the brink of a scandalous war, which many of us would class as a shade worse than the Dreyfus crime. We have had plenty of similar incidents. As Mr. Davitt pointed out—in a letter otherwise pitched in a very low key—England has committed many injustices in Ireland, in India, in Africa, and elsewhere, without any such fuss being made over them as Frenchmen made over the French injustice. The history of Ireland—even the latter-day history—is full of cases of men being imprisoned without trial, and of political opponents being treated as criminals; but England was not torn in two over the matter. And it may be well to point out, in the midst of the indignation over Dreyfus, that the crime would hardly have come to light at all if Frenchmen themselves had not focussed attention on it. For instance, as the *Newcastle Leader* acutely remarked, the Jameson Raid Inquiry, which involved the honor and good faith of the Government, was deliberately baulked, and practically every political leader in England combined to hush up the scandal. So that there is really some ground for the taunt that the difference between France and England seems to be that, while in France they care sufficiently about justice to create a national crisis over its violation, in England they only care enough to lecture other nations.

Then we have had scores of minor hypocrisies. Thus, I believe Price Hughes preached a sermon in St. James's Hall on the virtues of truth-telling—for French generals. On the other side we had the American press blustering of a boycott of France, and yet practically inactive whilst negroes in the Southern States are habitually dragged out of prison and murdered by the populace,

through just that race-animosity which was largely accountable for the Dreyfus injustice.

But the main point to which I wish to draw attention at present is the way in which the Catholic Church has been compromised by this Dreyfus affair; though in the letters which Anglicans and Nonconformists have been writing to the papers there is enough unconscious hypocrisy too. The case of Bradlaugh has been mentioned as not too unlike to Dreyfus's case by any means. Bradlaugh was treated with savage injustice, was persecuted, calumniated, and sought to be ruined—out of religious prejudice—by representatives of the very class who are now crowing over the Catholic Church's downfall in the Dreyfus business. Once more we are reminded of the essential unity of the theological mind. A certain type of religionist, in every Church, is always prepared to go to any extreme of crime, quite honestly, against those whom he imagines to be the enemies of his God.

The case against the Catholic Church in France, however, was admirably put in the remarkable letter of "Verax," who had himself been a Catholic, in the *Times* of September 1. He wrote:—

"The most conspicuous share of such responsibility [for the scandal] is, of course, that which the Catholic Press of France has openly taken upon itself in the campaign which prepared and alone rendered possible the humiliating scenes recently witnessed in Paris and at Rennes. There is scarcely a paper amongst those which claim to be supporters of the Catholic idea in France which has not contributed to the creation of the great myth of the syndicate of treason—the cosmopolitan conspiracy of Jews, Protestants, Freemasons, and Atheists; there is scarcely one which has not helped to inflame to a white heat the racial and religious passions of a people naturally prone to gusts of unreasoning fury and suspicion. And the worst offenders of all are, unfortunately, those very papers which affect to be more specially 'religious' organs—some of them actually edited by priests, and all priding themselves upon the avowed patronage of the Catholic hierarchy—papers unknown perhaps even by name in this country, but with an enormous circulation amongst French Catholics, like *La Croix*, *Le Pelerin*, etc., which, immediately under pious texts and side by side with sacred illustrations, publish, day by day, veritable proscription lists and scarcely veiled incitements to a new St. Bartholomew."

This indictment, from a correspondent of evident distinction, elicited a letter from Cardinal Vaughan on September 4. The Cardinal, however, made no serious effort to rebut the charges of "Verax." He admitted that "certain fiery organs of the cheap Catholic Press in France have been, unfortunately, carried away by partisanship." But, as he omitted to name any of the expensive Catholic papers which had not been so carried away, his argument was rather lame. Incidentally, he claimed credit to Catholicism in that the heroic Picquart and Labori were Catholics—a claim which, in so far as least as it concerned Picquart, the Cardinal had subsequently to withdraw. That officer, it is now admitted, is a Freethinker.

To this defence "Verax" promptly replied that it was not a personal question round Dreyfus:—

"It is not a question of 'belief in his guilt,' which for a long time, at any rate, was natural enough. The charge I bring against the Catholic Press, and against those in authority, whose influence might, and should, have been brought to bear upon it, is that upon this 'belief in his guilt' has been grafted a hideous propaganda of calumny and falsehood directed against all who did not share that belief" (*Times*, Sept. 7).

And, elsewhere, another writer put the same point with even greater force:—

"And let it be borne in mind that this has immediately nothing to do with Dreyfus. Were Dreyfus really guilty ten times over, it would not affect the campaign of rancor and hatred appealing to the lowest passions and jealousies which has been conducted under the patronage, and with the approval, of the ecclesiastical authorities in France."

To this, from the Catholic side, there is, of course, no answer. Cardinal Vaughan writes a rambling reply in which the chief note is a wail that his Church "has had to carry out her Divine mission" not even with one hand tied behind her, but "with both hands cut off," though why Omnipotence should have left its agent in that hapless condition the Cardinal does not explain. Nor does he explain what it has to do with the case at issue. For an organisation, accused of wrong-doing,

to put forth as a defence that its power was limited is curious. The charge concerns the use it made of what power it possessed. And on this head Cardinal Vaughan contended that the affair was "from beginning to end a State affair—an affair of military interests and State treason, in which the Church has had no place." He actually went on loftily to talk of "freedom of opinion"! "The French people," he said, "are as free as we are to hold what opinion they think right, or the most likely to be right." This, of course, sounds very fine, though it comes curiously from a Cardinal of the Church which claims the right to interfere in politics everywhere, which is constantly interfering, and which a few years ago, to take an example, asserted that claim in Ireland and dictated a political judgment. But, notwithstanding the loftiness, the Cardinal's defence is, on the face of it, ridiculous. For the charge is exactly that the people were *not* left free to decide, but that the Church and its organs threw themselves into the fray with vigor, and consistently slandered everybody who did not agree with them.

Let us take a couple of examples. *La Croix* is one of the great clerical organs, controlled and conducted by ecclesiastics. Its Paris edition is said to have a circulation of 250,000, and it has offshoots all over the country. "Papal blessings, archiepiscopal and episcopal letters of approval have," says the *Times* correspondent, "been showered on its good works, accompanied in many cases with more or less covert commendation of its political activity (see, for instance, the letter of the Archbishop of Aix published in *La Croix* of August 18th)." So much for the representative character of the paper. Now let us hear "Verax" again:—

"Cardinal Vaughan asserts that the Dreyfus case has been 'from beginning to end a State affair—an affair of military interests and of State treason, in which the Church has had no place.' What has *La Croix* to say to this? In its issue of September 8th we read: 'The Dreyfus case has hardly anything military about it; it is a religious case [*L'affaire Dreyfus n'a presque rien de militaire; elle est confessionnelle*].'"

And in an article on the feast of the "Nativity of the Blessed Virgin," in the same number of *La Croix*, the following choice passage occurred:—

"Perhaps we may see a triumph even more important (than those already enumerated) on the 8th September, 1889, at Rennes. We doubt whether the date will have been intentionally selected. But it may have been providentially chosen by the Blessed Virgin, who protects France in order to save the Army which is threatened. We have seen the godless ones throw themselves with unparalleled violence into the breach for Dreyfus, and roar with fury against the Catholic officers of our army. If so and so many millions, as Esterhazy himself testifies, have been expended—if the synagogue is up in arms, it must be that the issue is whether those shall finally triumph who deny Christ. May the feast of the Nativity of our Blessed Mother stay the death which threatens our ancient Christian France."

Fanatical imbecility of this kind is not, perhaps, rare amongst the religious press anywhere, but the above indicates clearly that the Catholic Press in France deliberately made of the Dreyfus affair, not, as Cardinal Vaughan asserts, a State or political question, but a religious crusade.

One more extract which comes to my hand is the last I shall quote on this aspect of the case.* It is a passage from the notorious sermon of Père Didon preached on July 22nd, 1898. Said the preacher:—

"A country could get on better without literature and art, even without science and philosophy, than without force. When persuasion has failed, when love has become powerless, it is necessary to have recourse to coercive force, to brandish the sword, to terrorise, to cut off heads, to strike hard, to impose justice. Woe to those who screen their criminal weakness behind the insufficient plea of legality, to those who let the sword lose its edge, to those whose kindness tends to become weak-kneed complacency."

That is evidently a sample of the tone and attitude of the French clergy. It will be remembered, for instance, that Cardinal Richard, the Archbishop of Paris, appealed to M. Waldeck-Rousseau on behalf of the *farceurs* in the Rue Chabrol—men who are openly defying

the law and made themselves for weeks a centre of disturbance, and who, if any hurt came to them, were themselves to blame. On that action of the Cardinal's, M. de Pressensé, in *L'Aurore* for September 4th, which lies before me, well remarked:—

"No; the truth is the Church has let fall the secret that the gentlemen of the cloth would have wished to hide—that of its alliance, offensive and defensive, with Anti-Semitism in its grossest and most scandalous form. Jules Guerin is a soldier of clericalism. The chiefs of the clerical army would be ingrates and blunderers to abandon this precious mercenary. The intervention of Cardinal Richard is at the same time the payment of a debt for services rendered and the drawing of a bill on future services."

Sufficient, then, has been said to show the responsibility of the Catholic Church in France for the scandals and crimes through which that country has been passing. And anyone who has followed the controversy in the *Times*, with the least impartiality, knows that Cardinal Vaughan has had absolutely no effective answer to make to the charges brought against the French hierarchy; whilst many English Roman Catholics have written in protest against their scandalous action. Indeed, one Roman Catholic journal in this country has spoken in very strong terms of the French ecclesiastics—and, incidentally, I submit that the fact of its denunciation is almost sufficient proof of the truth of the indictment. A Catholic journal does not admit charges against Catholicism unless the evidence is conclusive. And this is what the *Weekly Register* says:—

"To us, as Catholics, the crime at Rennes is a cause of profound shame and humiliation, for it is the painful fact—and we cannot deny it—that it reflects as well on the French Church as on the French nation. Not one single bishop, not one single French Catholic, clerical or lay, or of any standing or influence, has raised his voice against the direct incitements to murder, and the other atrocious utterances of the anti-Semitic party. On the contrary, many bishops and leading Catholics have been directly implicated in the agitation, and have aided and encouraged it. The *Imprimatur* given to the Abbé Delassus's book by the Archbishop of Cambrai, the notorious sermon of Père Didon, the publications of M. Renaud and others, issued from the Librarie de St. Joseph—these are but instances already known to our readers of the attitude of the French Church. Only recently a sermon, preached last Advent Sunday by a French Capuchin, has been published with the *Imprimatur* of the preacher's Provincial, which perhaps surpasses any other publication we have seen for its reckless wickedness. One of the preacher's pleasant suggestions is that the cross and the sword are the same shape; the hint is obvious."

Let us do the *Weekly Register* the credit of believing that these sentiments are inspired by the best motives rather than by the exigencies of diplomacy; though there can be no harm in pointing out that the Catholic Church does not stand to gain much by an Anti-Semitic crusade in England. But what are we to think of the Infallible Church, one of whose Cardinals describes as "infamous" a verdict which another Cardinal rejoices over as a triumph, and one of whose journals in one country classes as "reckless wickedness" what a journal in another country tells us is practically a triumph for Christ? To say nothing of the profound unity of teaching thus exhibited, the conduct we have been reviewing in France is surely a notable warning. Cardinal Vaughan says his Church has to work with both hands cut off. Judging by her exploits in that plight, most people who value human progress and the cause of human well-being will not readily wish that, by any anatomical miracle, these limbs should be restored to her.

FREDERICK RYAN.

War with the Priests.

War with the army of enslavement! Down with the seducers of childhood—the spiritual profligates who debauch the youthful mind! Banish them, with their spooks, from the school, the college, the court of justice, the hall of legislation! Let us train generations of sound minds in sound bodies, full of rich blood, and nervous energy, and frank inquiry, and dauntless courage, and starry hope; with faces that never pale at truth, hearts that hold no terms with falsehood, knees that never bend before power or mystery, heads that always keep a manly poise, and eyes that boldly challenge all things from height to depth.

—G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."

* For further examples see those put on record by Mr. Conybeare and by M. Urbain Gohier in the *National Review*.

Combating the Grey Wolf.

THE Christian attitude towards Freethought at the present time is what may be termed slowly Protean—that is, slowly Protean in the direction of tolerance. Christians will take a long time to learn that their religion absorbs but a very small portion of truth; but this they have learnt, that they cannot indefinitely, and with impunity, insult and endeavor to socially ostracise those who dare to reject their mythological and contradictory creed. Still, this same veneer of induced tolerance often ill conceals the blind, bigoted hatred for Freethinking opinions that lurks beneath it, and even now Christians occasionally let us see how ineffectual with them are those Christ-like precepts which inculcate kindness and forbearance. It is unmistakable that the majority of Christians delight in the legacy of hate bequeathed them from the grossly ignorant and intolerant Middle Ages; and the feelings of the savage recur in them whenever they get an opportunity of persecuting any person holding Atheistic opinions. However, while we have to withstand the rancorous opposition of the Christian sects, we have also to overcome the more serious obstacle of indifference which a large portion of the public displays not only towards Secularism, but towards Christianity as well.

It is a sad fact to know that a great deal of this indifference is the result of crushing poverty; and you really cannot expect a man to take a keen interest in matters intellectual when the prospect of starvation and a dearth of clothing are constantly troubling him. Nevertheless, poverty is, in a great measure, a result of ignorance, while superstitious religion is decidedly so, and both must be strenuously combated; for it is as necessary to ameliorate a condition of things in which one man starves while another eats to repletion, as it is to instil a knowledge of truth into a mind that is full of theological absurdities. The task is crowded with difficulties, but determination and ceaseless endeavor will remove many obstructions which at first sight appear insuperable.

We saw it stated in a contemporary recently that many clergymen, while disbelieving in the divinity of Christ and regarding the Bible very much as they would any other book of human manufacture, yet remain in the Church, thinking that by so doing they would have a better chance of doing good. What a contemptible apology! If there are clergymen of this kind, what derisive scorn they deserve for such conduct. A man who persists in getting up in a pulpit and preaching from a so-called sacred book on matters in which he has lost faith is a hypocrite. But, then, I suppose we must expect hypocritical clergy when so many members of their congregations are such detestable Pharisees. And what a mockery if these men joined in the indiscriminate yell of execration that recently was directed from this country against France!

However, despite widespread hypocrisy and indifference, and the malignant hostility of the various sections of Christianity, Freethought continues to make good headway, and it needs but a closer concentration of our forces to make our success more obvious to our opponents and more gratifying to ourselves.

The trend of general opinion on religious matters is certainly towards Rationalism. The Anglican Church is divided against itself, and is ripe for downfall. The Nonconformists are in an advanced state of decay, while the Pope's endeavors to further the cause of Catholicism in England are of no avail. Still, there is in all this disunity and decay much that is capable of harm to Freethought. The saintly ones are doing their level best to prevent people from sensibly enjoying themselves on Sunday, and would, if they dare, imprison and fine all those who neglect to attend church or chapel on the Sabbath day. That their unworthy efforts are being rendered futile is owing to the increase of good sense amongst the people of the British Isles.

However, notwithstanding the quieter attitude of Christians towards Freethinkers, we must not allow ourselves to be deluded into a false sense of security. It is, unhappily, still within the bounds of possibility for an eloquent and fanatical preacher to extensively stir up the bigots to deeds of violence and bestiality, and, therefore, we must be unrelenting and unmoved by any sentimental consideration in our aggressiveness towards the foes of enlightenment.

JAMES H. WATERS.

Beyond Death.

STILL glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide;
The Form remains, the Function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish;—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour.

—Wordsworth.

Acid Drops.

THE Lord Mayor received the New South Wales Lancers on Tuesday morning, and wished them God-speed on their way to the Cape, where they expect to assist in fighting the Boers. All through London streets the Lancers were cheered to the echo. Men and women, boys and girls, all joined in the demonstration, and cheered the dashing "Soldiers of the Queen" like mad. Evidently the mob wants war, and, as usual, doesn't seem to care very much whom we fight or what we fight about.

Later in the day the Lord Mayor received the Church Congress at the Guildhall. After the Lancers the parsons His lordship went off with them to St. Paul's singing "Blessed City, Heavenly Salem." No allusion, we suppose, to Pretoria or Johannesburg. Altogether, the Lord Mayor's two successive receptions help us to understand the true inwardness of Christian civilisation.

The Bishop of Peterborough, after praising the "admirable patience" of our Government, told his diocesan conference that war was rapidly approaching, and expressed a hope that our soldiers would feel that "the prayers of the Church at home were going up to God on their behalf." He overlooked the fact that the prayers would go up to God from the Transvaal against them. Maybe he fancies that God doesn't listen to Dutch prayers when English prayers are ascending. His lordship further hoped that our fighting men would "prove themselves soldiers of Christ"—soldiers, that is, of the Jewish preacher who said "Resist not evil" and "If one smite thee on the one cheek turn unto him the other also."

President Kruger considers himself quite as close a friend of God, to say the least of it, as the Bishop of Peterborough or any other Englishman. When the Raad was dissolved he told the members that "God would support them." This is a very comforting assurance—at the outset. At the finish it may look different.

Another clerical gentleman has been talking about war—the Rev. Morgan Gibbon, of Stamford Hill Congregational Church. "The Bible," he said, "was a book of peace, and even the Old Testament, with its pages besmirched with blood, was not a book of war." Certainly not. When you see a man covered from head to foot with blood you jump at once to the conclusion that he is an active member of the Peace Society. Of course the same influence holds good of the Old Testament.

"Why was it," Mr. Gibbon asked, "that Christians were so often the disturbers of the world's peace?" This question he answered by "dwelling on three or four points" that had nothing to do with it. Finally, he felt sure that "the march of events was on the side of true Christianity." But what is that? Is it the Christianity of Lord Wolseley, or the Christianity of Count Tolstoi? One would like to have this point cleared up. But, alas, it cannot be cleared up by anyone but Christ himself, and, although he was very loquacious for about three years nearly twenty centuries ago, he has maintained an obstinate silence ever since.

It is said that a sailor on board the *Hohenzollern* went to sleep while Emperor William was preaching. But the poor devil escaped punishment because the discourse was not the Emperor's own composition that time, and he didn't care to play hell with the sleeper for the sake of another fellow's sermon.

The shareholders of the Crystal Palace now see what they have brought down on themselves by their Sunday concerts. At a meeting of the General Committee of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, held at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, it was resolved "to suggest to the various religious and temperance societies the desirability of ceasing to hold their annual demonstrations and festivals at the Crystal Palace until the company decide to abandon their present policy of Sunday concerts." This is indeed a terrible boycott. But what have the temperance societies to do with Sabbatarianism?

Dr. Parker has a fine conceit of himself. He says one of the most eminent men in England once told him that in the time of trouble and illness he derived the greatest comfort from reading the *City Temple Pulpit*. Dr. Parker does not give the name of this most eminent man. Who was he? When we have eliminated Dr. Parker from the list, we can think of no one except Mr. Kensit. Mother Seigel gives the names and addresses of those who testify to the virtues of her syrup.

The Rev. J. R. Vernon, M.A., is gifted with fine poetic instinct and perception. He has just published another edition of his *Harvest of the Quiet Eye*. One example of his

observations will suffice. What, he asks, does the song of the thrush remind us of? Why, of course, of "the utterance of a strong and happy Christian." This kind of thing opens up possibilities. Though why could not the "Quiet Eye," or rather ear, have gone a little further and found in the song of the thrush the "utterance of a strong and happy Evangelical Christian who has just issued through the Religious Tract Society another edition of his book, price 3s."? That would have been complete, or, at least, about as far as we can expect a little thrush to go in the way of vocal delineation. No interpretation is given of the merry note of the common or garden jackass, which omission we must regard as a defect.

A correspondent of the *Jewish Chronicle* is much perplexed by Mr. Claude Montefiore's *Bible for Home Reading*. He quotes the following declaration in that work: "This story of the creation is pure phantasy. There were no such six days or six periods, nor were there plants upon the earth before there were sun or stars in the heavens. The world is millions of years and man is thousands of years older than these Hebrew writers knew of." The correspondent observes rather plaintively that he has "waited patiently since the appearance of the first volume of the *Bible for Home Reading* for some words of guidance from the spiritual heads of our community. Will they tell us how to reconcile the free criticism of the Bible with those principles of Judaism which form the living essence of true religion?"

How religion makes men love each other! The Christians have nearly harried the Mohammedans out of Crete, and the Mohammedans have just been returning the compliment in Persia. Four thousand of them attacked the Europeans at Kazvin, uttering fearful yells of "Allah!" while the row was in progress. "Allah," of course, is the name of their God.

Rev. Bernard J. Snell, of Brixton, has joined the clerical chorus which proclaims that Jesus did not mean what he said. Texts such as "Resist not evil," he says, must not be taken literally—that is, honestly. You must ask what Jesus ought to have said, and read that as what he did say, or what he meant to say. "Resist not evil" is nonsense as it stands, according to Mr. Snell, for "the universe is one great organised resistance of evil." Yes, but that is what Jesus said, or what he is reported to have said, which really amounts to the same thing for all practical purposes at this time of day. Jesus was an oriental, and oriental mystics and quietists have always taught the same doctrine. Buddha taught it centuries before the birth of Jesus, and his followers have always held that he meant what he said. They have not practised wriggling like the Christians; and, subtle as they sometimes are, their subtlety does not run into falsehood.

For years at Raratonga (New Zealand) they have been sleeping Sunday on the wrong day! Still, it may be counted to them for righteousness. The particular day set apart may not make any difference, because in this case the error lay with the early missionaries, who were men of God and able to sanctify any day that they pleased. It is impossible, however, for public servants in this country to have their "day or rest" on any other day than our Sunday, though their services on the Sabbath should contribute to the recreation of thousands of their fellow-countrymen.

The men of God have ordained it otherwise here. As they lay themselves out for preaching and praying on Sunday, nobody must do anything on that day but listen to them on pain of severe censure in the present life, if not of divine punishment hereafter. Which is a very good reason why common-sense people should laugh, sing, whistle, dance, cycle, play billiards, football, golf, cricket, cards; in fact, do whatever is convenient and agreeable to signify a wholesome contempt for the priestly imposition. Who are these sky-pilots that they should have a day set apart to their special glorification?

Whilst the Lord has had his attention engaged by the Transvaal, one of his churches at Dover has been struck by lightning and very much damaged. Accidents will happen in the best regulated universes.

The new Lord Mayor of London, after attending service at St. Lawrence Jewry, presented to the rector—in accordance with ancient custom—a bottle of wine. Several religious journals have suggested that the custom might be dispensed with. Why certainly; and so might the absurd custom of attending service on such occasions; and also the presentation of wine at Holy Communion in remembrance of the holy concealer who turned water into wine at the Cana wedding.

A crooked transaction has come to light in connection with the American Methodist Episcopal Church. The paid secretary of the Epworth League has been pulled up for taking a commission in connection with the book-publishing department. The secretary pleaded "the baby act"; he didn't know

it was wrong to make private profit at the expense of the Church. He has been exonerated, but it is suggested that a fresh casuistry is wanted in the Churches.

The Rev. Pubston Jones, M.A., the blind professor of Bala Theological College, has got himself into trouble by saying that "the redemption of mankind was obligatory on the part of God, as otherwise the creation of man would have been an injustice." Of course, having made man so weak that almost immediately after his creation he falls, the least that the Creator could do was to look about for some means for man's redemption. Even a blind man can see that, and why should the Professor's co-religionists howl?

Apropos of the Church Congress, a contributor to the *Church Gazette* says he has been trying to decide whether he likes these Congresses or not. On the whole, he thinks he does, provided he is not pressed into going to too many meetings. He adds that "in some respects women are more honest than men, and I verily believe that were it not that they do not like to go home and own their delinquencies, and also from the reluctance they have for wasting a good ticket, most of them would never sit out a single meeting. 'I do love the Congresses,' one young lady said to me. 'Papa always goes and takes me with him. We generally stop at pleasant houses, and have a lot of fun in the evenings, and then, as the Congresses are always in towns, one can spend the day looking in the shop windows, and loitering in the exhibition, where one is always sure of meeting acquaintances.' This young lady is overjoyed that the Congress is this year in London. I am sure I shall meet her at the picture-galleries, in Regent-street, possibly at a theatre; anywhere but at the Albert Hall or the Church House."

Here is a shocking story related by the same writer in the *Church Gazette* of the way in which parsons "shin out of their engagements" at Congress times: "Two noted divines had promised to attend a certain meeting towards the close of one Congress, only by the time it arrived they were deadly sick of talk. So they sent excuses, and then went and hid themselves. Their hiding-place was in a small room at the back of a tavern on the outskirts of the town, and there they comforted themselves with pipes and something hot and a good chat. Greatness has its penalties; unluckily for themselves, they were recognised, and the story was too good not to be told. When they met the convener of the meeting he was sarcastic on the subject of excuses."

The pig-headed piety of old Kruger is being made a considerable matter of reproach to his fellow Christians in this country. For instance, at the Edinburgh United Church Presbytery, the Rev. Professor Orr delivered himself as follows: "They had been talking about a revival of religion. He thought the first revival was a revival of faith in the first article of the creed—'I believe in God the Father.' Although many gibes and sneers had been thrown at and many estimates had been taken of the President of the Transvaal, there was, at least, this to be said of him, that he was about the only man who seemed to have a feeling, a consciousness that God had anything to do with this matter at all."

Laying up for oneself treasures on earth was specially condemned by Jesus. The author of that silly but widely circulated production called *In His Steps; or, What would Jesus Do?* has copyrighted his book, in order to make as much profit out of it as possible, like the author of that equally trashy yet largely sold novel, *The Christian*. A New York daily wants to know whether this is what Jesus would have done. Certainly the sweeping in of the shekels would be contrary to his attributed precepts, but then the Son of God was either too wise or too illiterate to write anything himself, though he came with a Gospel of Salvation for all mankind. Perhaps, as the Holy Ghost, he inspired the evangelists; but, as the world now knows, they made a fearful botch of it. Sheldon or Hall Caine would have done it much better—at least we shall not be far wrong in suspecting that that is their private belief.

It seems a trifle absurd for the *Church Times* to find fault with the showman-like methods of the Rev. W. Carlile at his church in Billingsgate. Sometimes, it is true, they are a little sensational and calculated to create a smile by their odd mixture of the "sacred" and the secular. But they are, at least, up to date, and having a saving element of common sense, which cannot be said for the primitive show business at the Ritualistic churches which have the special approval of the *Church Times*.

The Rev. Carlile—true to the traditions of his name—is not a man to be sat upon even by the *Church Times*. He has risen up and promptly resented the reflections passed upon him. In a spirited letter to the *Church Times* he defends his methods of filling an empty church in an empty city. Some of his remarks are rather naive. He mentions that one woman of the humbler classes he appeals to said to him:

"Since my ole man goes to your 'show church' he don't go any more to the music 'all." Well, of course, he hardly could on Sundays, and perhaps, as regards other nights, Mr. Carlile's show is as good as the general run of comic songs and comic business at the "alls." One man, he says, found it as good as going to a "pub."

But Mr. Carlile is not to be supposed to absolutely disregard the proprieties at his church. He says that even sacred pictures are not allowed to be shown by the magic lantern during the sermons and prayers. "Evensong and hymns are reverently thrown on the sheet between the pulpit and the desk." "Reverently" is good. How would he throw them on the sheet irreverently, supposing he should—which God forbid—be seized by some sudden fit of impiety?

Military music in barracks on Sunday is now objected to. The subject was discussed at a meeting of the Established Presbytery of Glasgow. One of the speakers said that the secular music of the bands was a desecration of the Sabbath. If an appeal to the officers was not sufficient, some representation should be made to headquarters in London. Then the cloven hoof appeared, another speaker pointing out that the band played "exactly at the canonical hours of worship in neighboring churches." That is it; the rival attraction is too strong to be safely tolerated.

This question of reverence in lantern services seems to have exercised the mind of the Rev. Father Dolling. In the last issue of his "Quarterly Letter" he says: "Once when I was preaching a mission in Somers Town, and they would have a magic lantern service for children, I, in the vestry, hearing sounds of the most ribald laughter, found a thousand children roaring over Adam and Eve *upside down* on the sheet; the nervous exhibitor, trying to put it right, showed it a second time in the same position, and a wag in the corner started 'There was Brown upside down,' a popular song of the day in which the thousand children joined most heartily." Dr. Dolling is, therefore, not very hopeful of good results from the majority of these services, and "deplores the want of any religious instinct in most of the lantern slides that are to be had." Certainly, if there is nothing better to be shown to children than Adam and Eve, upside down or right side up, the entertainments require some radical revision.

This is how the Lord is spreading his Gospel. A Japanese native paper, the *Osaka Asahi*, states that the foreign missionaries visiting Arima are specially numerous in the summer-time as a rule. It is now seven or eight years since the Christian missionaries made their way to that locality and started the work of propaganda. Since then they have, from time to time, held prayer meetings, etc., but the inhabitants are very indifferent, and, despite the missionaries having preached for some years, none of them have as yet been converted to Christianity. Buddhists are manifesting a disposition to form a united front against Christianity.

John Murray, a farmer, of Inchinmore, Ballyvourney, was going to Millstreet Fair, with several companions, and was doubtless looking forward to a good time. But he reckoned without that mysterious personage called "Providence." A storm came on, and John Murray was killed by lightning. One of his companions had an eye blasted, and another was also seriously injured. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

According to the *Soir*, the French Government will ask the Chamber for the expulsion of the unauthorised congregations. Certainly this question will have to be dealt with. The Jesuits, and some other religious bodies, are intriguers against the very existence of the Republic, and the Republic, like every other government, has the right to defend itself against hostile corporations.

Sabbatarians in New Jersey have compelled the officials to enforce the Sunday law against barbers and other traders. The result is a marked increase of swearing, and the law has to be enforced against profanity.

There was an unrehearsed bit of business at an ordination service in a Leeds Wesleyan chapel. A man got up with a Bible in his hand and denounced the ministers as hypocrites. After delivering his "message" he made tracks, perhaps for safety; although it is just possible that he was commissioned from above to tell the truth for once in a way in a gospel-shop.

Apropos of the *Puritan's* denunciation of the stage, the *Umpire* remarks that it is impossible to visit theatre or music-hall in London "without seeing some of the white-chokered fraternity present." The explanation (of course!) is that they must study sin to preach against it.

That Spalding vicar who began painting his church and schools many weeks ago is apparently still at it. At any

rate, he continues to crop up in the newspapers. He seems to be as slow as the Establishment he belongs to.

M. Saint-Saëns, the French composer, declined an invitation to Berlin on the ground that all climates were too cold for him in December, though he hoped one day to get warm in hell.

Mary E. McVicker, of New York, an elderly woman, committed suicide recently. She was found dead with the Bible tightly clasped in her hands. Inside it were a prayer and a hymn that she had written, and a request that the blessed book might be buried with her. Talmage may add this to his list of "infidel" *felo-de-se's*.

William Edward Bloomfield, a well-known Scripture reader at Wakefield, has committed suicide by shooting himself in the head—which could hardly have been the seat of any offence that he had been guilty of. We have no pride or pleasure in chronicling such facts. Our object is merely to show that Freethinkers are not, as Christians seem to imagine, the leaders in self-destruction.

George Quinton, of Whitton, a member of the Ipswich Board of Guardians, and for twenty years a churchwarden, has been fined £5, with £1 11s. 6d. costs, for indecent behavior in Christchurch Park. We omit details.

We are pleased to see that Mr. "Cardinal" Moran and the Protestants are still at it hammer and tongs over the mission question. We do not care to meddle in the affray, but prefer to wait until the holy bears have left off hugging each other. The chief thing we hope for is that the truth may come out in its nakedness, and that the mission shams, Popish and Protestant, will be damaged by it. It surely is about time for men, who no more follow Christ than the savages do, to drop the sham of converting the heathen. The Christians are growing un-Christian much faster than the Pagans can ever be converted. Hypocrites run the churches and the missions, and fools are cheated into supporting them. Let the fools become wise, and Moran and the missionaries too must turn to some honest calling. It is the fools who support and pamper the hypocrites. That is the plain truth: should we mince the matter?—*Joseph Symes*, in "*Liberator*."

The Church Congress has opened, and the Bishop of London got in very early with a comic speech. One of his jokes was this: he said he had been many things, but he had never been a mother. This colossal and tasty whiff of provoked peals of laughter; on the same principle, we suppose, as the elephantine jocularity of a judge sets the whole court laughing when everybody is jaded and glad for any relief.

The Bishop of London put in another speech at a side-show of the Congress—the Ecclesiastical Art Exhibition. "In the matter of art," he said, "the Church had always been supreme." Well, this is distinctly false. Art is simple for art, it gets art. So can any other body. So could Baron Grant and Terah Hooley.

The doom of America is sounded. At least the Rev. E. F. Smith, Archdeacon of Central Pennsylvania, says so. This gentleman is at present in England, and has been preaching at Portsea. In the course of his sermon he pointed out that religion was excluded from American high schools, and remarked that the American system of education "will produce a race of clever scoundrels." But will they be quite as clever, etc., etc., as Archdeacon Smith? We doubt it. This man of God belongs to a profession which has always succeeded in persuading people that nothing good can come without it, and that is about the cleverest trick we know.

At the opening of the splendid John Rylands Library in Manchester, a tremendously long prayer was offered up by the local Dean. What the special object of it was we are quite unable to discover. It couldn't possibly affect the character of the books on the shelves. Perhaps it was meant as a sort of security against fire or other accident. In that case, we wonder what difference it will make to the rate of insurance.

There has been another "burial scandal," this time at Ipswich. A local clergyman refused to bury an unbaptised infant, and declared that the poor little thing had not gone to Heaven. Well, we don't believe the reverend gentleman himself will go there. Heaven only exists in the map of fools. It is merely a part of the professional apparatus of priests. Probably that clergyman is not a bad fellow as a man. Very likely he wouldn't hurt a child himself. But he must keep up the honor (and profit) of his profession; and if an unbaptised infant goes to Heaven as readily as a baptised one, what is the use of baptism? See?

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 15, Secular Hall, Manchester; 11, "The Dreyfus Case and the Future of France"; 3, "Boers and Britishers"; 7, "Colonel Ingersoll: Living and Dead."

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 15, Athenæum Hall, London; 22, Hull; 29, Glasgow; 30, Motherwell; 31, Wishaw. November 1, Renfrew; 2, Carlisle; 5, Aberdeen; 12, Liverpool; 19, Camberwell. December 10 and 17, Manchester.—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.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your always useful batches of cuttings.
W. COX.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Percy Ward delivered three good lectures on Sunday at Liverpool.

E. GRIFFIN.—Thanks for cutting.
EDWARD BANNERMAN.—The extracts you send us from Ingersoll have already appeared in the *Freethinker*, and were probably taken from our columns in the first place.

C. DOUGLAS.—Probably because the goat was accounted salacious, and that is an aspect of the generative power of nature, which the old Hebrews worshipped in common with other ancient people.

J. O'HENEY.—Have addressed it for you, but the address is in the advertisement.

W. DAWSON and J. JONES (near Monmouth).—Prospectuses sent you have been returned by the Post Office as insufficiently addressed. Will you kindly forward correct and full address?

D. POWELL.—Sorry you cannot take Shares before Christmas, but better late than never. Do not worry yourself, in any case. There are enough Freethinkers to take up all the Shares without inconvenience.

W. SHEPHERD.—You can still obtain the late J. M. Wheeler's *Bible Studies and Footsteps of the Past* by applying to Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. It is possible that we may issue another volume of Mr. Wheeler's essays and articles, though we are too busy to undertake the project just at present.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Young Oxford—Torch of Reason—Crescent—English Mechanic—Free Society—New Century—Isle of Man Times—Ethical World—Hastings Observer—Portsmouth Evening News—Boston Investigator—Secular Thought—Zoophilist—Two Worlds—Manchester Guardian—Liberator—Umpire—De Vrije Gedachte—Guide of Life, by Joachim Kaspary—Open Court—Leeds Daily News—Truthseeker (New York)—People's Newspaper—Progressive Thinker—Yorkshire Post—Chorley Guardian—Sydney Bulletin—Ipswich Journal.

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.

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.

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

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

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

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 9s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Special.

The New Company.

A FRESH OUTLOOK FOR FREETHOUGHT.

MANY applications for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, have been received at the temporary office, 377 Strand, W.C., since the last number of the *Freethinker* went to press. On the whole, we are well satisfied with the progress that is being made. We did not expect all who promised support to take up their Shares immediately. Still, we hope there will be as little delay as possible. It would gladden and encourage us to find that *all* had reached the "sticking place" by next week.

Meanwhile, the Board of Directors are endeavoring to find suitable premises. What they want to obtain, as reasonably as may be, is a shop with offices attached. This shop should be decent, central, and in a good thoroughfare. The offices should provide accommodation for the *Freethinker*, for the National Secular Society, and for the Secular Society, Limited. The business of the movement will then be centralised under one roof.

Fortunately, the Secular Society, Limited, will be in a position to bear its share—a reasonable share, of course—of the rent. The Liverpool bequest, which is referred to elsewhere, comes in the very nick of time. If we were Christians, we should say it was a clear case of Providence. The moment is wonderfully propitious for a great effort by the Freethought party, and we hope they will rise to the full height of the occasion. The next few months, perhaps the next few weeks, will decide the immediate future of our movement, from the point of view of organisation and propaganda. By acting vigorously and judiciously now we may secure a period of brilliant prosperity. Everyone who possibly can should take shares in the new Company. That is the great thing at present. There are many Freethinkers who have not moved at all yet, but we hope the special circumstances—so unprecedented and so favorable—will stir them up to action, and even to some display of enthusiasm. We do not believe it would inconvenience the party in any way, collectively or severally, if the whole number of Shares yet unallotted were taken up forthwith. This *can* be done, and it *should* be done, and done *at once*.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectured on Sunday in the Secular Hall, Leicester. There was an excellent morning audience, and a large attendance in the evening, when the chair was occupied by Mr. Sydney Gimson. In the afternoon Mr. Foote spent an hour in seeing how the Secular Sunday-school was carried on under the superintendence of Mr. F. J. Gould, who is very successful in interesting the scholars in ethical lessons. Mr. Gould seems to have thoroughly settled down to his work in Leicester, and there can be no doubt about his popularity.

Mr. Foote lectures to-day (Oct. 15) in the Secular Hall, Manchester. His subjects are up to date, and will doubtless attract good meetings. He will have some Prospectuses of the new Company with him, and will be glad to receive Applications for Shares from South Lancashire friends after the lectures.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured last Sunday evening at the Athenæum Hall, London, to a highly appreciative audience. His peroration in favor of peace, with its many advantages, was enthusiastically applauded. Mr. C. H. Cattell occupied the chair. Mr. Watts lectures again from the same platform this Sunday evening, October 15, taking for his subject "The Church Congress Comedy."

The Annual Members' Meeting of the Secular Society, Limited, will be held on Wednesday evening, November 15, at the Manchester Hotel, Aldersgate-street, London, E.C. Formal notice will, of course, be sent out to all members. The object of this paragraph is to give them an opportunity of noting the date in good time, and also to remind them that they cannot vote at the Annual meeting unless their subscriptions are paid up. Some who paid their 10s. on entering have forgotten that 5s. is due for their second year's membership. The sum is not a great one, and where not paid it has probably been overlooked.

We should like to see fresh members enrolled, as well as the subscriptions of older members paid, before November 15. The first year's report will be of a very gratifying character, and as many Secularists as possible should attach themselves to this Incorporation, which is likely in the course of time to revolutionise the work of our movement. Gradually the Secular Society, Limited, is obtaining funds by bequest—for which purpose it was chiefly devised—and the possession of funds means the possibility of effective organisation.

The Secular Society, Limited, is in several wills for legacies. Mr. Foote arranged particulars of one, only a few days ago, for about £700. We have already mentioned the contingent legacy which will some day accrue to the Society from the will of Mr. Lawson, of Aberdeen. We have also mentioned the bequest to the Society made by the late Mr. Birch, of Liverpool. In this case, the residue of the estate is left to the Society, and it will probably amount to something over £1,000. The estate is being rapidly realised, and the Society may receive its share of it in the course of a month or two.

Freethinkers who wish to provide for a legacy to the Secular Society, Limited, in their wills should communicate with Mr. Foote if any difficulty arises in their minds after consulting their solicitors. The matter is extremely simple after all.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (October 15) at Stockton-on-Tees. We hope the Freethinkers in the district will make his meetings completely successful in point of numbers. Mr. Cohen's recent meetings at Gateshead were good in quantity and quality, and several new members were enrolled.

The late "Toby" King, of Hastings, was an out-and-out Atheist, but a Mr. Beaumont has been stating in the local *Observer* that he believed in a Supreme Power. Mr. Toby King, junior, denies this most emphatically. "I think," he says, "that I knew my father's opinions better than most, as we very often latterly used to talk the matter over, and he was expecting some misrepresentations of his opinions after his death."

Religion of Frederick the Great.

A KING with such views could not have been otherwise than tolerant, if sincere and filled with the courage of his opinions. And Frederick's courage was as great in the world of thought as on the field. The maxim with which he began his reign, "Every one shall be saved here in his own fashion," was adhered to, and found many repetitions and pleas in the king's writings. In the review of the Reformation he congratulates the world on the division of the Church, because the existence of several sects compels toleration. He speaks with pride of the policy of his house in this respect, adding: "All these sects live here in peace, and alike contribute to the welfare of the State. There is no religion which deviates much from the others in point of moral teaching; therefore government may treat them alike, and leave to each man the liberty of pursuing his own favorite way to Heaven; all that is asked of him is that he be a good citizen. False zeal is a tyrant who depopulates lands; toleration is a tender mother who fosters and cultivates them."

In brief, then, Frederick's beliefs were: The existence of goodness of God; the sufficiency of the motive of the highest happiness as the spring of action, supported by the categorical imperative of the conscience; the excellence of the Christian ethics, as well as that of all great religions; the duty of service to mankind and the State. He denied: All dogmatic affirmations regarding the independent existence of the soul and of the persistence of the personality; all dogmas regarding the supernatural character of Jesus; future rewards and punishments. He indulged on occasions some hope of meeting his friends after death. He firmly held the right and duty of religious toleration. He lived a life so great and honorable and consistent with these principles that those who find themselves in possession of many more positive beliefs than he had may well hesitate to cast doubt upon the reality or aspersions upon the character of his religion.

—*The Open Court.*

Paine was a better man than is commonly supposed, and a better writer than any contemporary in his adopted country. He deserves the eternal gratitude of Americans; he received from them contumely during life and denunciation after death.—*Athenæum.*

It can do truth no service to blink the fact, known to all who have the most ordinary acquaintance with literary history, that a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teaching has been the work, not only of men who did not know, but of men who knew and rejected, the Christian faith.—*John Stuart Mill.*

Not the smallest quantity of force is absolutely lost, or lost to the universe, but is only lost to the immediate object, and therefore seems to have vanished from the superficial glance. In reality, the excited energy has only taken a different shape, the amount of which must be equal to that of the former.—*Büchner.*

The Ritual of the Ridiculous.

WHEN the ambassador of Philip II. was reproached by his Sovereign with forgetting substance in ceremony, he replied with caustic politeness: "Your Majesty fails to remember that you are a ceremony yourself." In view of the fact that Christianity nowadays is little more than a ceremony, it seems hardly right that certain of its representatives should be arraigned on the charge of undue regard to ceremonial. They might retort in the terms of Philip's ambassador: "Christianity itself is a ceremony." But that is hardly as much as they are disposed to admit. Still, the life-and-death importance that they attach to ceremonial seems to suggest that that is what they chiefly care for. And perhaps they are right.

The spirit of Christianity has long ceased to exist. Its memory lingers only in forms and ceremonies. Without them the God-intoxicated outpourings on the Galilean shores would have had no currency in the present day. These utterances were early preserved from oblivion by Paul, who is more to be regarded as the founder of Christianity than Christ. They gained importance from imperial support, and were eventually preserved and transmitted to us by the Romish Church. From that Church the Ritualists have borrowed as much as they dare of the ceremonies which in later centuries have given the Christian faith a semblance of life. It is true the Romish ceremonial observances, and those adopted by the Ritualists, are absurd; but what else can be expected in the ritual of the ridiculous?

Christianity, in spite of all apologetics, is ridiculous in its essential features and in its claims. It professes to be of divine origin, but to vast sections of mankind it has been, and is, unknown. That simple fact alone stamps it as an imposture, and justifies Rabelaisian laughter at its pretensions. It is impossible to regard, as a message from the Maker of all things, that which succeeds in reaching so small a proportion of his creatures, when ostensibly it was intended for all. One of the so-called "evidences" in its behalf is, that the Almighty gave it a great "send-off" in the earlier centuries—that is, when it received the patronage of the secular powers. But what has he been doing for it since? Say that he has inspired missionary enterprise. What has that done? The lament of missionaries is that myriads are living and dying without the saving knowledge of this heaven-sent gospel. Further, it is impossible to regard as a Divine message that which is so differently interpreted by those whom it does reach; and is rejected by many who apply to it the reason which is said to proceed from the same source. Something is needed to bolster up a faith which thus *prima facie* stands condemned. The Roman Catholic Church has long found extraneous supports in the discountenance of the exercise of mere human reason and judgment, and in the exaltation of such rites, ceremonies, and adjuncts as confession, vestments, genuflexions, and processions. Holy Mother Church has been wise in time, and Ritualists have taken a leaf out of her book of wisdom. Nothing is to be gained from the naked, abstract principles and precepts of Christianity. Nobody nowadays actually reduces them to practice in daily life; or, if real believers do, they are liable to be regarded by their fellows as weak-minded or dangerous fanatics. Let us, then, have millinery, perfumery, lights, images, crosses, rosaries—anything that appeals to the senses and dulls the reflective and critical faculties. In symbolism is safety—at least, for some time to come.

Modern Christianity being mainly a show, why should there be so much angry feeling excited by the ceremonial vagaries of Romanists and Ritualists? They are quite in keeping with the absurdities they are supposed to represent. Imagination may be stretched to the point of perceiving and identifying that which is intended to be symbolised. There may be a great deal about these symbolical representations which is essentially ludicrous. One is apt to be reminded of Pyramus and Thisbe in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the prologue which explains: "This man with lantern, dog, and bush and thorn, Presenteth Moonshine"; followed by "Wall," who says:—

In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;

And such a wall that I would have you think
That had in it a cranny'd hole or chink;
This lime, this rough-cast, and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall; the truth is so.

Whereupon Theseus remarks: "Would you have lime and hair to speak better?" And can we expect all that is disparagingly called the "mummery and flummery" of Catholic symbolism to speak better than it does? If we wish to partake of the body of Christ, it is presented in a baked mixture of flour and water; if we wish to drink his blood, it is presented in wine. Incense may be fancifully supposed to represent the ascent of prayers to heaven; lighted candles the light of the world; and so on through all the priestly accessories and performances which go to make up the Christian show. These outward and visible signs do more to induce inward and spiritual grace than the most subtle and persuasive discourses. And why? Because the former appeal to the senses, and the latter (when listened to) challenge the exercise of reason, and that is fraught with spiritual peril.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Religion and the Deaf-Mute.

"Who maketh the dumb, or deaf?.....have not I, the Lord?"
—EXODUS iv. 11.

THAT unfortunate section of humanity which, through disease, accident, or heredity, is born deaf and (as speech is the product of hearing and imitation) dumb, contributes its quota to the science of the brain, and the proper classification of its functions. The pious authors of numerous books upon the subject say as little as possible about the theological issues, which, for the same reason, perhaps, may have some claim to the closer consideration of Freethinkers.

St. Augustine admits that "This very defect itself injures faith, for one who is deaf from birth cannot learn the letters by whose knowledge he would attain to faith." The writer of the article, "Deaf and Dumb," in the *Popular Encyclopedia*—a Christian—declares:—

"After extensive observation and inquiry we cannot hear of or find a single instance in which a person born deaf has conceived of a First Cause from a view of the works of nature without education. They describe themselves as looking at these objects like the brutes. Even those to whom their friends have made great efforts to communicate religious truths seldom have an idea of Deity as a Creator or Benefactor; and a deaf mute at Chartres, in France, who had been taught to perform the rites of the Catholic Church, and was deemed very devout, on receiving his hearing stated that he had no conception of anything but the external forms of religion."

William Wilde, in *Aural Surgery*, says:—

"Prior to the sixteenth century, during those ages wont to be called enlightened, and in those countries styled civilised, and even refined, among the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews, the deaf mute was (and even still in the Orient is) but little removed from the brute—not considered susceptible of improvement or instruction."

He may have the brain of a Shakespeare, but must remain practically imbecile. His condition is worse than blindness.

In his *Education of Deaf Mutes*, T. Arnold writes:—

"There is only objects and their motions. It is a mental imprisonment in perpetual silence, from which the knowledge and sympathy which might make it tolerable are almost excluded. But the loss cannot be estimated..... The senses have been called the windows through which the soul beholds all things; but close those windows, or let nature fail to open them, there would be no perceptions, and knowledge, in consequence, quite shut out."

Herder, in his *Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, says:—

"The history of uneducated deaf-mutes shows how rarely men can rise to the exercise of reason within the mere limits of animal instinct. A deaf mute will imitate whatever he sees, whether good or bad, just like a monkey—though he is, indeed, sunk lower even than that animal, for the instinct of sympathy with his race is wanting in him."

He cites the instance of a born deaf-mute who murdered his brother, after he had seen a pig killed, simply from

the instinct of imitation, "and even rooted in the entrails with a savage, senseless pleasure"; and the author adds: "This is a horrible proof how little our vaunted human reason and sympathy with our species can effect when dissevered from the faculty of speech."

This and numberless other instances do not reply to the question, Where is the soul? as believers could wish, nor do they add substance to the claims of inherited religious tendency.

In fact, as Dr. Love, no mean authority, and aural surgeon to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, asserts in his recently-published (1896) volume, *Deaf-Mutism: A Clinical and Pathological Study*: "The whole subject of the physiological psychology of deaf-mutism is as yet in its infancy."

During the last three hundred years men like Ponce, Bonet, Wallis, Bulwer, Dalgarno, Amman, Sibscota, Periera, De l'Epece, S. Heinicke, Baker, Braidwood, Pestalozzi, and Froebel have devoted the best part of their lives to the amelioration of this class. Signs, the manual alphabet, and latterly (with better success) lip-reading, have been employed.

In England the Elementary Education Act of 1870 made no provision for the deaf, although there is an average of two to every thousand of the population. They remained under the wing of Christian charitable institutions, with the usual accompaniment of constant debt and incompetence. Yet we might suppose that their education was as much a communal necessity as the lighting of our streets. The Act of 1893, which secured a grant from the Board for this purpose, has greatly improved this condition of things.

The method of inculcating so-called religious knowledge at the institutions is, of course, slow and easily followed. For example: "A table, made by a man—a carpenter" is learned and repeated by the scholar. Then follows: "The carpenter—and everything—made by God." Here the child frequently inquires who made God—the question being evaded in the usual manner. Then: "America—due west. Heaven—due overhead. Bears live in America—God lives in Heaven, etc." This is the incipient stage of their orthodoxy. These ideas, true or false, are all received with the same ready credulity; but the religious thoughts are hammered in like nails on every conceivable opportunity, according to a set pattern. They are driven by the theological hammer deep into the delicate tissue of the passions of fear, self-esteem, and avarice. Any attempt on the part of the little victim to compare the absurd mysteries with his limited experience of true things only fixes those ideas by a sort of automatic repetition. The mental friction thus locally set up is considered as inspiration, and the victim of the clerical mallet declares that the dogma-nails grew there.

Thus, the civilised priest effects the same mental condition as the savage experiences through the medium of the fearful idols, strange fetishes, and magic of the witch-doctor, or the constant powerful forces and grand objects of nature. And the religion of the deaf-mute is bounded only by the conservative capacity of the memory.

GEORGE WOODWARD.

Ambrose Bierce (Dod Grile) Defends Ingersoll against Professor Harry Thurston Peck.

(Concluded from page 653.)

PROFESSOR PECK has a deal to say against Ingersoll's methods; he does not think them sufficiently serious, not to say reverent. This objection may be met as Voltaire met it—by authorising his critic to disregard the wit and answer the argument. But Professor Peck will not admit that Ingersoll was witty. He sees nothing in his sallies but "buffoonery," a word meaning wit directed against one's self or one's fad. This amazing judgment from the mouth of one so witty himself could, but for one thing, be interpreted no otherwise than as proof that he had not read the works which he condemns. That one thing is religious bigotry, which, abundantly manifest everywhere in the article under review, is nowhere so conspicuous as in the intemperate (not to say low) language in which the charge of "buffoonery" is made. Who that has an open mind would think that this was written of Robert Ingersoll: "Burst into sacred silence of their devotion with the raucous bellowing of an itinerant stump-speaker and the clowning of a vulgar mountebank?"

To those who really know the character of Robert Ingersoll's wit—keen, bright, and clean as an Arab's scimitar; to those who know the clear and penetrating mental insight of which such wit is the expression and the proof; to those who know how much of gold and how little of mud clung to the pebbles that he slung at the Goliaths of authority and superstition; to those who have noted the astonishing richness of his work in elevated sentiments fitly expressed, his opulence of memorable aphorism, and his fertility of felicitous phrase—to these it will not seem credible that such a man can be compared to one who, knowing the infidelity of a friend's wife, would "slap his friend upon the back and tell the story with a snicker, in the coarsest language of the brothel, interspersed with Rabelaisian jokes."

It is of the nature of wit mercifully to veil its splendors from the eyes of its victim. The taken thief sees in his captor an unheroic figure. The prisoner at the bar is not a good judge of the prosecution. But it is impossible distinctly to conceive a scholar, a wit, a critic, an editor of a literary magazine, committing himself to such judgments as these upon work accessible to examination and familiar to memory. To paraphrase Pope:—

Who would not laugh if
Such a man there be?
Who would not weep if Harry Peck were he?

Another "point" that Professor Peck is not ashamed to make is that Ingersoll lectured on religion for money—"in the character of paid public entertainer, for his own personal profit." And in what character, pray, does anybody lecture where there is a charge for admittance? In what character have some of the world's greatest authors, scientists, artists, and masters of crafts generally lectured when engaged to do so by "lyceums," "bureaus," or individual managers? In what character does the clergyman preach who serves for a salary? In what character does Professor Peck conduct his valuable and entertaining magazine for instruction and amusement of those willing to pay for it? In what character, indeed, does this Defender of the Faith put upon the market his austere sense of Ingersoll's cupidity?

Obviously the Agnostic's offence was not lecturing for pay. It was not lecturing on religion. It was not sarcasm. It was that, lecturing for pay on religion, his sarcasm took a direction disagreeable to Professor Peck, instead of disagreeable to Professor Peck's opponents. As a ridiculer of Infidels and Agnostics Ingersoll might have made a great fame, and not one of his present critics would have tried to dim its lustre with a breath, "nor with polluted finger tarnish it."

Religions are human institutions; at least, those so held who belong to none of "the two-and-seventy jarring sects." Religious faiths, like political and social, are entitled to no immunity from examination and criticism, and all the methods and weapons that are legitimate against other institutions and beliefs are legitimate against them. Their devotees have not the right to shield themselves behind some imaginary special privilege, to exact an exceptional exemption. A religion of divine origin would have a right to such exemption, and its devotees might with some reason assist God to punish the crime of *lese majeste*; but the divinity of the religious origin is the very point in dispute, and in holding that it shall be settled his way as a *modus vivendi* its protagonist is guilty of a hardy and impertinent impudence. Blasphemy has been defined as speaking disrespectfully of my phemy; one does not observe among followers of one faith any disposition to accord immunity from ridicule to the followers of another faith. The devoutest Christian can throw mud at Buddha without affecting his good standing with the brethren, and if Mahomet were hanged in effigy from the cross of St. Paul's, Protestant Christianity would condemn the act merely as desecration of a sacred edifice.

I must crave the reader's indulgence for one more quotation from Professor Peck, the concluding passage of his paper:—

"Robert Ingersoll is dead. Death came to him with swiftness and without a warning. Whether he was even conscious of his end no man can say. It may be that before the spark grew quite extinct there was for him a moment of perception—that one appalling moment when, within a space of time too brief for human computation, the affrighted mind, as it reels upon the brink, flashes its vivid thought through all the years of its existence and perceives the final meaning of them all. If such a moment came to him, and as the light of day grew dim before his dying eyes his mind looked backward through the past, there can have been small consolation in the thought that in all the utterances of his public teaching, and in all the phrases of his fervid eloquence, there was nothing that could help to make the life of man on earth more noble, or more spiritual, or more truly worth living."

This of a man who taught all the virtues as a duty and a delight!—who stood as no other man among his countrymen has stood for liberty, for honor, for goodwill towards men, for truth as he saw it, for love!—who by personal example taught patience under falsehood and silence under vilification!—who, when slandered in debate, answered not back, but addressed himself to the argument!—whose active life was an inspiration to high thought and noble deed and whose errors, if

errors they are, the world cannot afford to lose for the light and reason that are in them!

The passage quoted is not without eloquence, and the literary distinction which its author gives to so much of what he writes. Withal it is infinitely discreditable. There is in it a distinct undertone of malice—of the same spirit which among bigots of less civility and franker speech, affirms an irreligious person's sudden death that it was "a judgment of heaven," and which gloats upon the possibility that he suffered the pangs of a penitence that came, thank God, too late to command salvation. It is in the same spirit that conceived and keeps in currency the ten thousand times disproved tales of the death-bed remorse of Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and all the great infidels. Indubitably posterity will enjoy the advantage of believing the story of Ingersoll, and I cannot help thinking that, by suggesting his remorse as only a possibility, instead of relating it as a fact attested by piteous appeals for Divine mercy, Professor Peck has committed a sin of omission which on his own death-bed he will himself suffer the keenest regret.

Thomas Paine.

In a general way the building or rebuilding of public-houses is not a matter of much concern to readers of the *Freethinker*. Just for once, however, attention may be permitted to one of the newest Temples of Bacchus in London. A few rods down the St. John-street-road, Clerkenwell, and within a stone's throw of the well-known "Angel" at Islington, the removing of the scaffolding has disclosed the new building erected on the site of the "Old Red Lion"—a handsome-looking building of white stone, red brick, brilliant glass, mahogany, all quite in the most modern style. On the premises will be seen the dates 1415-1899, showing the place to be almost the oldest licensed premises in the country. "Old Tabard Inn," of Southwark, is probably the only other license.

This "Old Red Lion" should be of some interest to Freethinkers, as may be seen from the following extract from the *History of Clerkenwell*, by William J. Pinks (4to, London, 1865):—

"In the year 1811 it was described as a small old-fashioned house with two or three trees in front. In a room here was written that curious engine of political mischief, *The Rights of Man*, by Thomas Paine, who with one hand attempted to overthrow the throne of his king, and with the other an impotent but malicious blow at the altars of his God. Burke unloosed his grasp on the one side, and Watson, the venerable Bishop of Llandaff, disabled his impious arm on the other."

A footnote to this cites *London and Middlesex*, by Rev. J. Nightingale (vol. x., part iii.); but that work, not being in hand, cannot be referred to for any other possible opinions on Paine.

Another history of Clerkenwell (with numerous engravings by T. and H. S. Storer and the Historical Department, by Thomas Cromwell (8vo, Pentonville, 1829), has a curt reference to Thomas Paine, "who, in his lodgings, here wrote some of his works."

Judging by the much-mixed figure of speech used by W. J. Pinks—or his successor, E. J. Wood, for Mr. Pinks died before the completion of the work—he was very angry at the writer, who aimed a blow at God's altar with one hand, while the other was engaged in overthrowing a king's throne.

In the historian's opinion Burke and Watson together doubled up Paine. To make a wicked, but positively irresistible, pun, we are inclined to say that time has proved how very completely they were doubled up by Paine.

It is pretty safe to say that if during the next three months every passer-by the "Old Red Lion" could be questioned as to his knowledge of Burke, Paine, and Watson, ten would be able to name a book by Paine to every one by either Burke or Watson; which rather suggests that the blows were not, as some would like to make out, as impotent as some would like to make out.

How to Help Us.

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

The Gospels as Drama.

I REMEMBER, when once witnessing a play of The Nativity, that the posings and elaborate intonings of carols and pathetic hymns by Mary and others were all in place behind footlights. The "asides" and attitudinising of Jesus before the resurrection of Lazarus, his affectation of vehement grief, after telling his disciples secretly he was glad Lazarus was dead that he might display his power, etc., led Renan to suspect that Jesus and Lazarus and the sisters had got up a little deception; but it is much better explained if we suppose Lazarus, and performed in rural districts (in the second century) where the people had been accustomed to the sacred Greek plays. It is the belief of many learned men that the Oberammergau play succeeded a sacred pagan play in the same village. There is little doubt that many of the apocryphal gospels are relics of pious performances by which alone the humble masses could be impressed, when there was as yet no printing and little painting; and it is not improbable that various narratives in the New Testament, among them the resurrection of Jesus, were to some extent shaped by dramatic exigencies, and are now as unfairly accepted, or criticised, as literal history as it would be to so treat the dramatic representations of Robespierre and Napoleon now pronounced crowds in Paris and London. All of this may be justly than the alternative hypothesis of mere fraud in the commanding unhistorical and mythical. Of course this would not affect the fact of such dramas being founded on vague popular beliefs, but only account for the definiteness and completeness of their historic shapes in the New Testament. It would also explain the fact that the tremendous miracles are not alluded to by any historian of that era—not even Josephus. In all modern world there is an element of supernaturalism, though in the frame there are few novelists, romancers, or playwrights able to frame a plot which does not, at some vital point, rest on an improbability. The Greek stage was a nursery of mythology. How is it that we find the Gospels written in, or on, the eve of the second century so full of Christ's miracles, whereas not one is alluded to in the first century writings, the Epistles? Possibly for the same reason that we find in Rostand's La Samaritaine some wonders ("thought-transference") not in our own time. As legends of preternatural events now grow, so grew they of old, and so it appears they will grow until the intellectual soil is too highly cultivated for their nourishment.

—Moncure D. Conway, in "The Open Court."

Correspondence.

THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Through overwhelming business I have been unable, now, to comment on "An Open Letter to the Members of the Christian Evidence Society," which appeared in the Freethinker of September 17 (pp. 597-8). If my reply be brief, it is to the point: (1) I in no way justify Mr. Wright's remarks, in the light of "M. L.'s" report, I cannot accept its accuracy with regard to him. But Mr. Wright is not, and never has been (as far as I can discover), an agent of the Christian Evidence Society; and he was allowed to speak by an experienced youth, acting on that occasion for our regular chairman, who was absent. (2) Mr. Green flatly denies the truth of several of the statements made by "M. L.," some of which I know to be false. (3) The expressions used by "M. L." with regard to our lectures are utterly unjustifiable in the mildest term—and of that I have absolute proof.

C. LLOYD ENGSTRÖM, Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society.

October 6, 1899.

Mr. Engström has taken weeks to furnish this pious reply to "M. L.'s" letter. What he says calls for a word of editorial comment. We wonder how he can "know to be false" statements about a meeting at which he was not present. We also wonder what is the "absolute proof" he possesses of the perfect respectability of his colleagues and employees. Mr. Engström always poses as a Christian gentleman. But whenever he is told—and he has been told scores of times—of the vile tactics and language of some of his underlings, he invariably finds that these "gentlemen" are misrepresented, and thus permits the scandal to continue. Personally, we thought "M. L.'s" letter a mistake, because it gave prominence to irreclaimable blackguardism. Where amendment is impossible we must let the malady alone. That has been our general policy hitherto, and we intend to adhere to it strictly in the future. The controversial character of Christian Evidence speakers, after all, is less our concern than Mr. Engström's; and, perhaps, the worse he allows them to be the better for the cause they assail.—EDITOR.]

Ingersoll.

Ingersoll was a master liberating force. If all he said was forgotten, if all ideas he conceived were disproved, if all the currents of concrete life set the other way, he would nevertheless be remembered, accomplishing an earthly immortality. He would be remembered as Luther is remembered by people who know nothing about Luther. Luther is a rare reminiscence. He epitomized an epoch, a protest, a resolve, a cry for liberty. Very few people know anything about Luther. They know he translated the Bible, that he threw his still dripping inkpot at Satan, that he met the devil full-robed in a priestly council and was not afraid. Many do not know this much. Few know more. Yet they rightly apprehend the essential Luther. He still mountaintainously engages the eye. Ingersoll will stand at a meeting point of historic tendencies, in a like way focussing rays, rallying diverse streams, uttering unencumbered idealisms. There he will remain for ever, indexing a defiant disturbance and revival of the spirit. Sweep every written word into oblivion, and still the figure will immovably arrest the vision.

—H. L. Traubel, in the "Conservator."

The purport of the hour is vast. The world wants justice. It demands United hearts, united hands— The day of charity is past.

Let no man think he can despoil And rob his kind by trick and fraud, And at the last make peace with God By tossing alms to honest toil.

Men have outgrown the worthless creed Which bade them deem it God's goodwill That labor sweat and starve to fill And glut the purse of idle greed.

They have outgrown the poor content That breeds oppression. Forged by pain Mind links to mind in one great chain Of protest and of argument.

And by the hand of progress hurled This mighty chain of human thought, In silence and in anguish wrought, Encompasses the pulsing world.

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

The extant forms of supernaturalism have deep roots in human nature, and will undoubtedly die hard; but in these later days they have to cope with an enemy whose full strength is only just beginning to be put out, and whose forces, gathering strength year by year, are hemming them around on every side. This enemy is science.—T. H. Huxley.

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The Society has powers to purchase, lease, rent, or build halls or other premises; to employ lecturers, writers, organisers, or other servants; to publish books, pamphlets, or periodicals; to assist other associated persons or individuals who are specially promoting any of its objects; to co-operate with any kindred Society in any part of the world; and to do any other lawful thing in furtherance of all or any of its said objects. To this end it is empowered to "have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society."

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Persons of means who approve the Society's objects are invited to insert a clause on its behalf in their wills. This may be done without the slightest fear of misadventure. It would be well, although not necessary, to apprise the Board of Directors of such a clause having been inserted; or the communication could be made (in confidence) to the Chairman.

Without waiting for the realisation of such bequests, the Board of Directors appeal to members and sympathisers for donations, in order to push on the Society's work.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Watts, "The Church Congress Comedy."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, Miss Bertha Jeffries's Dramatic Company in romantic drama, "Bracken Hollow."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Stanley Jones, "The Reaction in Modern Society."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. M. Robertson, "The Feeling for Religion and the Feeling for Truth."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Plato on Immortality."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): 3.15, E. Pack.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, E. Pack.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30 and 7, E. Pack. October 18, at 8, W. J. Ramsey.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, Stanley Jones.

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

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, A. B. Moss.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, W. Heaford.

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Unreason of Religion."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): H. Percy Ward—11, "The Christian Devil"; 7, "Are Unbelievers Fools? A Reply and a Challenge to the Rev. J. H. Jowett, M.A."

BRISTOL (in the Horse Fair): 8, J. Keast.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Joe Clayton, "Shelley, the Prophet of Democracy."

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 7, Mr. Pryde, "Hell."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Celsus, "Criminology and Penal Reform"; 6.30, Social Meeting.

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, W. H. Bailey, "Religion of Cheapness."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, J. M. Gimson, "Three Eighteenth-century Novelists: Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, S. Reeves, "Practicability of Socialism."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote—11, "The Dreyfus Case and the Future of France"; 3, "Boers and Britishers"; 7, "Colonel Ingersoll: Living and Dead." Tea at 5.

STANLEY: October 14, at 7.30, in the Board School, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Revenge." October 15, in the Co-operative Hall, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner—3, "Revenge"; 7.30, "The Queen's Reign of Peace."

STOCKTON (Bowes Assembly Rooms, Yarm-lane, near the Theatre Royal): C. Cohen—11 and 3.30; also at 6.30, "The Origin of God."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, M. D. O'Brien, "Is Belief in Miracles Necessary to Salvation?"

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Business Meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—October 15, Stockton.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—October 15, Birmingham. 22, Leicester. 29, Huddersfield. November 5, Birmingham. 12 and 19, Manchester. 26, Birmingham. December 17, Birmingham.

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