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PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Lord of Hosts.

THE Christian Deity is the Lord of Hosts. He is also a man of war. He taught David's hands and fingers to fight. He planned those awful campaigns of the Jews against the original inhabitants of Palestine. He ordered the indiscriminate slaughter of captives, in which neither age nor sex was spared. He also ordered the massacre of the males and the married women, in some cases, and the retention of the virgins by Jewish soldiers and priests. On one occasion the Lord's share of the lust-devoted maidens was thirty-two. It is not to be supposed, however, that they passed into his harem. Of course they were appropriated by his clerical representatives. These gentlemen stayed at home while the fighting was on, and prayed for victory, and when it was won they took their share of the spoil, whether it was gold and silver, or sheep and cattle, or "pretty virginites."

The Old Testament reeks with blood. Jehovah was quite the Jack the Ripper of antiquity. No wonder that the first great Christian bishop of the Goths would not translate into their speech the worst parts of the wars of the Jews. He was afraid of heightening the blood-thirstiness of his people. But no such scruple damped the translating zeal of others, and every Christian nation now reads in its own tongue the foul story of Jewish barbarity, and the fouler story of all that wickedness being commanded by God.

This "blessed book" may almost be regarded as the murderer's manual. Yet it is put into the hands of boys and girls without the least reservation. Nay, it is forced into their hands, in spite of the protests of those who wish them to be conversant with a loftier morality than that of bandits and cutthroats. Is it surprising, then, that Christian nations are so ready to draw the sword? They are the greatest disturbers of the world's peace. They have carried the art of slaughter to the highest degree of perfection. They appear to feel that, if the Lord loves a cheerful giver, he has even more love for a cheerful fighter. They consecrate their battle-flags, when they proceed to bloodshed. At such times they forget all about the sweet maxims of peace and goodwill which they make such a boast of in the intervals of their quarrelling.

Whenever did Christianity prevent any nation from going to war if it felt disposed to do so? Directly the war-fever rages a considerable number of the clergy fan it, and most of the rest confine themselves to talking cheaply about attending to justice and mercy when the fighting is ended. Very few of them stand up and champion the cause of peace. They know how they get their livings, and they want to stand in well with their countrymen.

One of the strongest arguments against the existence of God is that he never interferes on behalf of progress. When man is bent on playing the beast, his deity gives him free play. He even allows his worshippers to pray

to him for success in murder, without telling them that they ought to be ashamed of themselves. Any decent God would tell them, when they put the matter to him pointedly, that they are fools and wretches for trying to kill each other, and worse fools and wretches for asking him to bless them in their criminal madness.

Suppose half-a-dozen boys came to their father and told him that they were going to divide into two parties and fight each other to a finish. Suppose they said that one or two of them might get killed. Suppose they asked him to supervise the engagement. What would that father say? "Wait a minute, boys," he would say, "while I get that big whip. When I come back you will all want tough breeches."

It is about time we dropped that old deity who is "strong and mighty in battle." The world has had enough of him, or rather too much of him. He is really an old savage idol, painted and decked to look like Jove. Give him a chance, and he shows his blood. Off goes the modern raiment, and the naked savage is on the warpath. There is blood and lust and destruction. And when the orgie is over the old fellow puts on his cast-off clothes, and sits with a fine, bland smile, to receive the adoration of his devotees.

A change of gods would be better than nothing. But the best thing would be to have no God at all. Whatever deity men worship only echoes their own passions. He is an Edison machine, speaking back what is first spoken into it. He never says anything new or original. He informs us of what we know, and never tells us anything fresh. He corroborates our opinions, flatters our emotions, and pats our characters on the back. He is never ahead of us. And why? Because we make him. We are not *his* creatures—he is *our* creature. And those who worship him, we repeat, are worshipping an idol. Far better would it be if we framed our ideal consciously and deliberately. It would then be always up to date, and somewhat beyond. It would be the essence of our best thoughts, our deepest principles, our noblest aspirations. Communing with that ideal, bringing ourselves to its test, even looking at it from time to time, would do us more good, and raise us higher in the scale of being, than could ever be done by bowing to the personification of the lower conceptions of our forefathers. They made their God; let us make ours, if we must have a God; or let us dismiss all gods, and worship, if need be, in the Temple of Humanity.

Meanwhile let all Freethinkers wage war against the Christian superstition. Whatever good it may have done when it reflected the current ideas, it has long outlived its usefulness. It is no longer anything but a hindrance. It is powerless to help forward the real progress of the world. It is one of the many causes of discord and division. It leaves men and women at the mercy of a faulty, inherited ideal; and, by saving them the trouble of thinking and the responsibility of forming just judgments, it is ever drawing them back to the dark past instead of urging them forward to a brighter future.

G. W. FOOTE.

Without God!

MUCH as we admire the great abilities of Mr. Herbert Spencer, who, in our opinion, is one of the profoundest thinkers of our age, yet we have often thought that in introducing his "Unknowable" he made a mistake. Not only to the practical mind does the word represent nothing, but its use affords the opponents of Freethought a peg upon which they hang many absurdities which they suppose are damaging to the position taken up by Freethinkers. To us the "Unknowable" is non-existent, and that which has no existence cannot possibly be a factor in the regulation of human conduct. We, therefore, have no use for words that do not represent realities, or for those that are capable, when employed, of producing confusion of thought.

For this reason we regret that Professor Huxley substituted the word Agnosticism for the term Atheism—two expressions which, so far as the condition of man's mind is concerned, mean really the same thing. They both imply being "without God," whatever this phrase may be supposed to signify. We consider that the Professor would have rendered more service to correct thinking if, instead of adopting the phrase Agnosticism to represent his non-belief in God, he had endeavored to give a true meaning to the term Atheism, which has been so grossly misrepresented by theologians. Personally, we prefer the latter term, when properly defined, because it indicates our mental attitude in reference to the supposition of the existence of God and a future life. Atheism, as Mr. George Jacob Holyoake writes, "is a defiant militant word. There is a ring of decision about it. There is no cringing in it. It keeps no terms with superstition. It makes war, and means it. It carries you away from the noisome word-jugglery of the conventional pulpits, and brings you face to face with nature" (*Trial of Theism*, p. 244).

No doubt, by some persons, the term Agnostic is deemed milder and more "respectable" than that of Atheist; but this is in consequence of the odium which has been unjustly attached to the latter word by theological bigots. Would it not be more useful and dignified to strive to remove that odium than to seem to give countenance to it by abandoning the designation? Between the two words there may be a distinction in some minds; but we repeat that in their true meaning there is no essential difference. Where the two are not in agreement is upon minor points that in no way affect their disbelief in what is called the existence of God or immortality. The expounders of both isms acknowledge that they are "without God." This being so, let the opponents of Theism say what they mean and mean what they say. Why should we be ashamed of our Atheism if it be true? And an Agnostic cannot honestly say it is not true, inasmuch as he accepts and avows its cardinal principle. Neither *denies* the existence of God, but both avow they know nothing about him. Mr. Bradlaugh, who was the leading Atheist of his time, has plainly said: "The Atheist does not say 'there is no God,' but he says: 'I know not what you mean by God; I am without idea of God; the word "God" is, to me, a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation. I do not deny God, because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception, and the conception of which, by its affirmer, is so imperfect that he is unable to define it to me'" (*Freethinker's Text-Book*, p. 118).

As to the fad about the lack of "respectability" of Atheism, it has little or no force at the present day, except, perhaps, in the minds of those who are steeped in theological prejudice, and such persons are equally opposed to Agnosticism. Fortunately, men are judged less than ever by their professions of either Atheism or Theism. It is by their conduct that their characters are tested. And the fact that it is acknowledged, even by our opponents, that Atheists can be, and are, as honest and truthful, and as good and useful citizens, as Theists, should silence the cry of "lack of respectability" among those who have the courage to proclaim that they are "without God." There is also much cant indulged in about what is termed "vulgar Atheism." But we ask, Where is it manifested at the present time? Possibly in the past, when Atheists were sorely tried and bitterly persecuted by the Church, and when they were deprived of their civil rights, their domestic comforts,

and their personal liberty, their resentment of such Christian treatment—cruel and unjust as it was—was not always shown in the most polite language. This, however, cannot be fairly cited in depreciation of Atheism, for Theists have not been very choice in their language and conduct towards their Christian brethren who persecuted them, to say nothing of the volleys of vulgar abuse that have been directed from the Theistic camp towards Freethinkers. Christians, we opine, would not admit the validity of a charge urged against religion on account of the vulgarity of some of its professors. Why, then, should they adopt such a course in reference to Atheism? Moreover, it ought to be remembered that the term Atheist has been applied to all kinds of men, regardless of their views as to the existence of God and a future life.

We have just been reading a very broad-minded editorial article in the *Church Gazette* of September 30, entitled "The Agnostic." The writer frankly avows himself an Agnostic, but he says the word "must be accepted in its true etymological sense of one who does not know, and does not presume to decide either way." He admits that Agnosticism is a "phase of opinion largely entertained among our population, which it is impossible to ignore or overlook, either in respect of its numerical strength, its intellectual vigor, or the effect which it undoubtedly exerts on the feelings and general views of life held by this generation as a whole." He, however, falls into the common error of Christians in saying that an "Atheist describes a man who has definitely found out that there is no God." This, as we have shown, is not correct. We have never met an Atheist who professes to have "found out" anything of the kind. The most he does is to acknowledge that he has failed to find out that there is a God. The editor says: "We take the term Agnostic to stand for a set of persons who find the problems of life and death something too overpowering for their faculties, and who consider that, even taking into account all the light which seems derivable from any source, inspirational or philosophical, there are, in fact, not sufficient data for approaching these problems. They do not arrive at any conclusion worth having. They cannot deny, but they will not affirm, that which they see no adequate or convincing reasons for affirming. Let us say at once, that against these people, so far as they are honest and earnest, there is no moral obligation to be alleged. It is very easy to make out that men fail to see straight merely because there is a beam in the eye, but such an *ex parte* contention simply lays itself open to a prompt but fruitless *quoque*. It is foolish to urge that earnest Agnosticism is in itself evil and immoral, both because the allegation is in itself general stand the test of scrutiny, and because abstract belief is only of intrinsic value in so far as it depends on evidence; and thus lying, as it does, beyond the domain of personal feeling and inclinations, such belief is also outside the limits of moral responsibility. Certain facts and certain side-lights are presented, we will say, to a certain mind, along with certain positions, inbred or acquired. If it determine among these data, as it is compelled to determine, the act of so doing is neither morally evil nor yet praiseworthy, but it is simply a necessary mental act."

This we regard as a candid and fair statement, so far as it goes, of Agnosticism. It is also the position taken by Atheism, thus showing that the teachings of both are alike in reference to God and a future life. Such a bold statement of allegiance to the facts of nature, without the introduction of any alleged supernatural element, is appreciated by us the more, coming as it does from a Christian source. Verily Freethought is exercising its influence inside as well as outside the Church. We hope, however, that the editor of the *Church Gazette* will ere long recognise that the Atheism of to-day is not "a cold, dreary, and uninspiring negation," but that the Atheist is one who is positive about the known, and deems it a duty to act in obedience to natural laws, and who urges that virtue and justice should be practised and observed by every member of the community. To him Atheism is valuable because it exalts man above nature with a self-sustaining power; it fosters self-reliance, and it assures man that within himself deliverance must be sought. This is no theory of despair. In

contrast with the theology of the Churches, the Atheist works for the elevation of humanity, "with lips bent firm to resist oppression, and melting into soft curves of passion and of pity; with deep, far-seeing eyes, gazing piercingly into the secrets of the unknown, and resting lovingly on the beauties around him; with hands strong to work in the present; with heart full of hope which the future shall realise, making earth glad with his labor and beautiful with his skill—this, this is the ideal man enshrined in the Atheist's heart."

CHARLES WATTS.

The Church Congress and Labor.

THE people of London have many grievances, but there is one at least that they have borne uncomplainingly. For years it has been an unwritten rule that the annual Congress of the State Church should always be held in the provinces. I am not sure that the generality of Londoners have been aware of this regulation; but, if so, they have faced the annual exodus of metropolitan clergy with such an amount of fortitude as would lead one to believe that the stoical temperament is far from uncommon. This year, however, the rule has been broken. None of the provincial centres were desirous of undertaking the necessary arrangements, and so the Congress is being held in London for the simple but satisfactory reason that no one wanted it elsewhere. Kensington was selected as the scene of operations, and from all quarters members of the Black Army have foregathered to discuss their organisation.

Naturally enough, a certain portion of the time of the present Congress was devoted to social questions. I say naturally, not because the clergy are ever frantically anxious to discuss such matters—as a matter of fact, they never begin to talk about a subject until the outside world has gone right through it—but because, as social subjects are monopolising more and more of the world's attention, the various Churches, for very decency's sake, are compelled to at least pretend some interest in the matter. Last year there was a pretty plain expression of opinion from all sections of the English press at the ridiculous picture of a body of men claiming to direct the higher life of the nation, and spending their time almost exclusively on the discussion of matters that were of little moment, while the great and burning questions of life were passed over in silence.

Profiting by last year's experience, the Congress placed first on its Agenda a series of papers dealing with the claims of London. And what a farce the whole discussion was! Here was one of the greatest cities of ancient and modern times under discussion; no needs to move from their armchairs to learn, through the medium of the press, its sharp extremes of wealth and poverty, its misery, its destitution, and its crime. All this, indeed, was noted by the various speakers, and, as a result, the principal remedy proposed was, "Let us build some more churches." When I saw the heading, "The Claims of London," I had thought that the discussion was to deal with some of the pressing problems of London life. Alas for my hopes! I found the "claim of London" resolved itself into a discussion on the claims of the Church on Londoners, and the vital need of building more places of worship. All discussion of really important social issues, such as the removal of all those demoralising physical and mental and social conditions that lie at the root of our troubles, and without the removal of which our efforts are but a ploughing of the sand, were relegated to the far end of the meetings, when the attendances were thinnest and the interest weakest. By the time an attempt was made to deal with purely social matters, the *Daily Telegraph* said, "more seats were empty than were occupied. The attendance was as thin and as somnolent as old age. It was evident that all the real life of the thing had departed in the climax of the debate upon ritual." Such questions as those dealing with better sanitation, old-age pensions, the housing of the working classes, could awaken no interest among the members of the Church Congress. They had expressed their opinion of what was required earlier in the proceedings; and that may be summed up in the phrase: "Give the people more religion—we sell it."

For that is really all that the cry about insufficient church accommodation amounted to. There is ample church accommodation in Great Britain for all the people who are inclined to avail themselves of it. The competition among churches, the efforts made to get people into church, prove it. A man may have to wait an hour to get into a theatre; he is seldom put to that test to get into a church. But more churches means greater clerical influence, and it is by this test that the priest always measures the welfare of a nation. All over the country thousands of pounds are raised by poor people to build costly churches that often represent money that should have been spent in home comforts. But who ever heard the clergy advise people to spend their money on making their homes comfortable before contributing to build a church or chapel? Rather the encouragement is the other way about.

The clergy are always far more pleased at seeing a church well filled than they are distressed at seeing a whole family living in one room. There is, to my mind, no greater scandal occurring in the small towns and villages of Great Britain than the constant multiplication of churches and chapels, while those that help to build them are living amid conditions that crush out the better part of their nature. If God Almighty would rather see elaborate edifices in which people might worship him one day out of seven, than he would see them the occupants of decent habitations in which they spend every day of their lives, then he is a being about whom no decent individual need trouble his or her head. And if the forty or fifty thousand priests of Great Britain devoted half the energy to the housing question that they do to building "gospel-shops," that problem would be almost a thing of the past.

But far from proposing to limit the expenditure on religious buildings, the speakers all united in the desire to see this outlay largely increased. Archdeacon Sinclair found a solution to most problems in advocating that the Bishop of London should be transformed into an Archbishop—with, of course, an increased salary—and that there should be a bishop for each one of the new municipalities. Here was a brilliant suggestion indeed! There are more churches now existing than the people care to fill; therefore let us build more. There are more clergy ordained than work can be found for—foreign missions and the like are maintained chiefly to carry off the surplus parsonic population; therefore, says the Archdeacon, let us create bigger offices in the Church, treble the number of curates, and all will be well. How this is going to benefit the poor of London is more than the ordinary lay intellect can understand.

What, after all, do the poor owe to the Church of England? Of what is good, nothing. Of what is evil, much. There is not a single movement for the advancement of education, the promotion of self-government, or the furthering of the general well-being of the people, that has ever received the support of the Church until the movement had assumed proportions that put successful resistance out of the question. And necessarily so. The welfare of the State Church has always been bound up with the maintenance of the status of crown and aristocracy, and during the whole of its history it has consistently supported the privileged classes against the mass of the people. On only one occasion during its history has the Church of England found itself in opposition to the Crown, and that was in 1688, when legislation threatened its purse and promised to curtail some of its monstrous privileges. On all other occasions it has been the bitter enemy of social reform; and Dean Farrar may well admit that "It is a humiliating lesson to observe how few of the great moral and humanitarian reforms were wrought by English Churchmen; how our bishops and clergy have been often lukewarm or hostile to changes which were asked for the advance and happiness of the human race." "How few" reforms have been wrought by the English Church is surely a mild way of putting it. One might ask, Have any been initiated and carried by it? And the answer would be, "Not one."

I do not mean it to be understood that, in my opinion, Nonconformists are any better at bottom than Episcopalians. A political accident has converted them into enemies of the existing relations of Church and State, and compelled them to seek for support among the people. Political circumstances are as much responsible

for Nonconformist support of democracy as they have been for Episcopalian opposition; and I, for one, do not feel inclined to give Dissenters, for conduct due to a political accident, that credit which should only be given to the expression of definite principles. Had the cases been reversed, had any of the Dissenting bodies possessed the power and privileges of their rival, there is no reason for believing that their conduct would have been any more admirable.

The disastrous failure of the Church to improve the general well-being of the people, or to breed a more desirable type of character, was strongly, although unconsciously, emphasised by Canon Edwards, of South London. Speaking of Nonconformity in South London, he declared it to be a stationary, if not a vanishing, force. "South London is too poor for Dissent. It exists; it does its best; but it cannot thrive." Of course, the Canon could hardly have meant that the people were intellectually too poor to rise to anything higher than Church of England teaching. Mental poverty is not usually an obstacle to the adoption of the Christian faith, and is often an important element in its acceptance. No; what the speaker obviously meant was that sheer physical poverty prevented the people turning their backs on the State Church. Well, I believe there may be a deal in the Canon's remark, and that it contains more truth and admits of wider application than he imagined.

For "too poor for Dissent" means that the people of South London are too poor to quarrel with the Church of England, and that can only mean that they are too poor to lose their share of the charities that the Church manipulates. The Church, drawing enormous revenues from the people, gives back a small portion of its gains in the shape of a charity of the most demoralising description; the people, blinded by the immediate gain of a loaf, a blanket, or a small money present, look upon the Church as their benefactor, and barter their independence and manliness for the relief (?) given them by the Church. Could there be a clearer admission of the demoralising tendencies of the Church than this? After centuries of existence, after retaining control of the population from cradle to grave, we are faced with the fact that there are large bodies of people who are too poor to think freely, to speak honestly—in a word, to be men.

As I have said, this statement admits of a wide application. Dissenters complain—probably with truth—that in villages and towns the charities of the Church pauperise and demoralise the poorer classes. And, if this matter affects Nonconformity in relation to the Established sect, it also affects Freethought in relation to Christianity in general. The economic factor will express itself in religion as elsewhere. It is the wealth of the Churches that gives them a large measure of their power, not the intellectual sanity of their teachings. The rich they buy by promising to keep the poor in check; the poor they bribe by doling out ostentatiously a small portion of their wealth that is gathered surreptitiously.

In all directions the Churches make for the degradation of character rather than for its elevation. And, when one looks beneath the surface at the true nature and effects of the forces at work, it becomes tolerably plain that, despite the good intentions of large numbers of earnest believers, the greatest obstacles in the way of dealing satisfactorily with the problem of poverty are the Christian Churches. Of these offenders the State Church may be truly said to occupy the first place; not because it is inherently worse than any of its competitors, but simply because, its power being greater, its opportunities for working evil are more numerous.

C. COHEN.

"An Incredible God."

In the controversy which arose in the *Times* over Cardinal Vaughan's Stockport address there was a rather curious encounter between the Rev. R. F. Horton and Mr. James Britten, the Secretary of the "Catholic Truth Society." Mr. Horton, in the interests of Protestantism, argued that Catholicism was a parent of Atheism. "When the bulk of a community," he said, "regards the Pope as God's vicar, a minority, and not

the least intelligent section of the community, cease to believe in God; a God whose vicar was Alexander VI. becomes to many minds incredible." It may be mentioned that Alexander VI. (1492-1503) was one of the worst of the mediæval popes. It was he who put Savonarola to death (1498), and he is described by Mosheim as "inferior to no one of the most abandoned tyrants of antiquity." He was the father of Cæsar and Lucretia Borgia, he had numerous children by a mistress named Vanozza, and he died in 1503 by swallowing poison in mistake, which he and his son, Cæsar Borgia, had intended for one of the cardinals. Ranke, indeed, tells a story of the cardinal, having learnt of the plotting some of the servants to work off the poison on the pope. Such are the salient features of the interesting career of Alexander.

Feeling, apparently, that Mr. Horton's reference to this history required somehow to be met, Mr. Britten furnished the following reply in the course of a letter to the *Times* of September 11:—

"It is our shame and our sorrow that Protestants are able to point to Alexander VI. But I am tempted to ask whether, if 'a God whose vicar was Alexander VI. becomes to many minds incredible,' what is to be said of One among whose chosen followers was a Judas? Do Englishmen condemn the Monarchical system because there have been criminals among our kings? Do we abandon respect for the law because we have had a Judge Jeffreys on the Bench? Did the Israelites cease to be God's chosen people because of their backslidings?"

The amazing weakness of this effort really makes one wonder that Mr. Britten, after the fashion of religious disputants, did not ignore Mr. Horton's point altogether—even as Mr. Horton, in this same controversy, has persistently ignored Mr. Britten's demand for evidence as to one of his statements. The reference to Monarchy by Mr. Britten is singularly weak, since many people object to the hereditary principle of government for just the reason, amongst others, that it provides no safeguard against "criminals" being rulers. The argument that the fact of God's "chosen people" being "backsliders" furnishes some excuse for God's chosen agents being blackguards is certainly quaint. It may be a good *tu quoque* as against Mr. Horton, who does not complain of the incredibility of the backslidings on the part of the "chosen people," or the treachery on the part of the "chosen followers." But to Rationalists the thing is merely amusing.

The main absurdity, of course, of Mr. Britten's reply is, that judges and kings—unless he assumes the latter to be "divinely appointed," in which case Mr. Horton's argument holds good for them too—judges and kings are only men appointed by men. It is one of the unpleasant subterfuges of the religious controversialist that he is always excusing the shortcomings of his God by the argument that men have their shortcomings. We are not unfrequently told, for instance, when the contradictions and absurdities of the Bible are pointed out, that human historians often contradict themselves and write absurdly: this, after claiming beforehand that the Bible is not human. If a Minister of State, say, habitually appointed judges or ambassadors who were scoundrels, it would surely reflect on his character. Even if, in one or two cases only, he appointed good men, would it not be clear that, at least in those cases, he had been imposed on or had made a mistake? Are we to understand, then, from Mr. Britten that Omnipotence, whilst accurate in the main, occasionally makes a mistake, as in the case of Alexander VI.? It is, perhaps, unnecessary in these columns to pursue Mr. Britten's futilities further. If his is the best explanation that "Catholic Truth" has to offer, it is to be feared that that curious entity is in an unfortunate way. It only remains to be mentioned, on this aspect of the matter, that Alexander VI. was no such wonderful exception as Mr. Britten's remarks would lead one to suppose. For instance, at the beginning of the century, which the pontificate of Alexander fitly closed, there was Pope John XXIII., a quite interesting blackguard, who was so outrageously bad, even for those times, that he was deposed by the Council of Constance (1414) for crimes which included "simony, extortion, poisoning, adultery, and incest." Not very long before John there were rival popes—Urban VI. and Clement VII.—at Rome and

Avignon, each claiming to be the real pope, and each excommunicating and damning the supporters of the other. It is not to the present purpose to pursue this history, but it may be said that "God's vicars" certainly require some defence.

Having dealt, however, with Mr. Britten, let us turn to the self-righteous Mr. Horton. In the first place, of course, his suggestion or innuendo that Atheism is a peculiarly Catholic product, against which Protestantism is an antidote, is transparently absurd. It is, indeed, no uncommon thing for Catholics to argue, as absurdly, that Protestantism, with its "right of private judgment" and the rest, is the real source of Atheism. These little compliments between rival Christians are more or less in the nature of things. As a mere matter of fact, much of the Rationalist lead in this century has come from Germany and England—two "non-Catholic" countries. Doubtless, the "Catholic" countries furnished their quota. The work of France at the latter end of the last century and of Italy at the Renaissance cannot be too highly appraised. But the fact is, the cause of human emancipation is general, and is not limited to particular nations; though, as Mr. J. M. Robertson has well argued, its particular manifestations at different times are largely determined by political and economic conditions. So much for the pretended pietist case which Mr. Horton, for his section of Christians, wished to make against Mr. Britten's section.

Mr. Horton, however, has admitted one thing, that the god-hypothesis must be judged by facts. From the way in which he puts the case against Mr. Britten, he evidently feels, with "not the least intelligent section of the community," that a god who acts in a foolish or immoral way is an impossible conception. On this admission we should like to know how far, then, is his own god possible? And on the very point raised by Mr. Horton we may well ask: Is a god who allowed and allows millions of "his children" to believe (erroneously, as Mr. Horton would say) that scoundrels were his agents, when he could have undeceived them, so much less "incredible" than one who appoints the scoundrels? After all, the important thing in this connection is what men believe, and it seems to matter little whether or not tyrants and blackguards were *really* "God's vicars" if God permits men to think they were.

Is a god, then, who, by inaction, misleads his worshippers credible? Is a god who, wishing to communicate a message to mankind, yet so obscures it that the people who have heard it are split into three or four sections at hopeless variance as to its meaning—is such a god so much more tolerable a conception than one who deposes avaricious and lecherous princes to be the interpreters of that message? Where all is absurdity can you distinguish the different shades of that quality—and is it really worth while even if you can?

So much for the foolish side of Mr. Horton's conception. What of its moral side? His deity—by assumption—watches a ship like, say, the "Stella" go down with its human freight—and he does nothing. He sees women and children, the young and the old, helpless and panic-stricken, swallowed by the ravenous jaws of the sea—and he does nothing. He creates fire and earthquake, famine and war; he sees the innocent and the deserving struck alike—and he does nothing. He creates children fated from birth to disease and suffering, to whom life will be a burden, and perhaps a terror; he watches old men and women, having perhaps spent their lives in toil, die of hunger and despair—and he does nothing. Even at this moment we are to assume he is spectator and author (since he is the author of "all things") of a war which will bring agony to thousands of homes, will break thousands of hearts, ruin thousands of lives—and he does nothing. Is such a god credible?

No; we reject Mr. Horton's god precisely because of the reasons for which he rejects Mr. Britten's, and we defy him to prove the credibility of his deity by any argument which would not be invalidated by the very grounds on which, implicitly, he negates the hypothesis of his opponent. Both hypotheses, as a matter of fact, are absurd, both involve incredibilities, both are negated by science and by common sense.

The Secular View of Life.

[The following manifesto is an attempt to present to the public a succinct explanation of Secularism, with the special aim of showing its positive as well as its negative aspects.]

THE Christian religion directs man to live as the servant of God, to lament his fallen condition, to look to Christ as a Savior, to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to shun the suggestions of the Devil, and to regard heaven as the home of the righteous and hell as the portion of the wicked. The Secular view of life is very different. It persuades us to live as servants of the commonwealth, to rejoice in our power to rise to higher levels of thought and conduct, to look to ourselves for salvation, to follow the guidance of conscience disciplined by reason, to shun all conduct that injures the community, to regard no man or woman as utterly lost to good feeling, and to labor for the establishment of justice in all human relations. Theology appeals to God, Secularism appeals to man.

Secularism has a twofold work to fulfil. First, it has to protest against the fashionable religion which centres our thoughts upon God and a supernatural world. It affirms that belief in such doctrines is not the best means of helping us to live honorable lives, and to form clear ideas of our place in nature. Secondly, it seeks to build up a better method of life and a better conception of human capacity, human history, and human duty. Secularism, therefore, is both critical and constructive.

CRITICAL WORK.

Secularism claims the right to criticise the theory of God's existence, character, and purposes. It criticises all religious and all sacred books, and especially the Bible. It judges these things in the interests of human progress, and in the conviction that human reason ought to be applied to all questions affecting our conduct and welfare. It seeks to judge without ill-nature or bias, and it asserts the necessity and benefit of free discussion on every religious and social problem.

CONSTRUCTIVE WORK.

Secularism, on its constructive side, elevates right conduct to the position of supreme importance. It denies that belief in God or Christ is necessary to one who would act honestly, and it promotes morality on a purely human basis.

We, therefore, who profess Secular views, endeavor to do constructive work in the following directions:—

1. We demand that men and women shall make the cultivation of *personal good character* their first object.

2. We strive after a healthier sense of *citizenship*, and a politics which shall free itself from religious strife and ecclesiastical connections, and express the best thought and aspirations of the democracy.

3. We desire to see the creation of an *Ethical Democracy*, in which the rights and self-respect of the individual are brought into harmony with the rights and self-respect of society, in which employers and workers shall be encouraged to act with mutual justice, and in which both the rich and the poor shall be helped towards a nobler conception of society.

4. We claim a wider sphere of work and influence for *women*. Women are capable of doing much better social work than that to which priestly teaching has confined them, and we hold that satisfactory progress will not be made until the fullest opportunities are given to women to exercise their natural gifts and moral qualities.

5. We ask that *education* shall be entirely liberated from theological bonds. Children should be trained by methods which will give them ability to reason clearly, impart a sound knowledge of human history, and render good character the chief aim of school-life.

6. We advocate a more rational view of *recreation*. On the one hand, theological errors must not be allowed to check the use of Sunday for wholesome amusement, or to hinder the expansion of all forms of healthy play. On the other hand, we desire to see the character of the public taste raised, and all classes of society develop a finer sense of the value of leisure hours.

7. We believe that *art and literature* should be released from every theological restraint, and, instead of promoting the interests of priesthood and dogmas, should

minister to the human love of truth, beauty, and goodness, and celebrate the achievements of human skill and affection.

8. We co-operate in the establishment of *international peace*, and to this end we wish to break down all religious barriers, to multiply international congresses, and to assist in making each nation better acquainted with the history and achievements of other nations. F. J. GOULD.

Acid Drops.

PRESIDENT KRUGER, on his seventy-fifth birthday, looked forward to war with Great Britain, but was still "full of faith in the Almighty." There is something quite pathetic in this old gentleman's trust in Providence. He has taken luck for divine assistance, but that is the common fallacy of superstition.

President Kruger went to the length of saying that "the Almighty directed every bullet." Then what is the use of rifle practice? If the Lord directs every bullet, you may as well fire wide as fire straight. On the whole, we begin to think that President Kruger's piety has a strong tinge of "Dutch simplicity."

Without arguing at present the rights and wrongs of the South African quarrel, we may be allowed to say that God Almighty did President Kruger an ill turn if he inspired him to send that astonishing ultimatum to the British government. Napoleon himself could hardly have exceeded its insolent peremptoriness when he was at the height of his power. It put the Transvaal technically in the wrong, which is always a bad mistake; and it gave England an opportunity, when the war is over, of saying: "You began it, and we shall take care you never have another chance of beginning the same thing again." From the political point of view it was an act of sheer madness, unless the Boers seriously believe that they can beat sixty thousand British troops, with the resources of the British Empire behind them. It seems highly probable that the Boers, who have invaded Natal and Cape Colony, will never go home again except as prisoners of war. What will they think in that case of President Kruger's statesmanship? What, by the way, will they think of President Kruger's "God"?

"Providence" may help the Boers, but it doesn't seem peculiarly sympathetic just now with the race they belong to. A violent earthquake has been permitted to devastate the island of Ceram, in the Dutch East Indies. The town of Amhei has been totally destroyed, 4,000 persons have been killed, and many more injured.

Surely it must be a "faked" report that the Boers want to get hold of Cecil Rhodes alive or dead. He does not appear to be a combatant, and you cannot make prisoners of non-combatants in civilised warfare. Moreover, the murder of Cecil Rhodes would inevitably invite stern reprisals, for he has a multitude of friends in South Africa as well as in England. It is not a question of whether the Boers are justified in hating him. They may have a thousand good reasons for doing so. It is a question of elementary ethics in warfare. On the whole, we incline to think that this report was manufactured in Fleetstreet.

Cecil Rhodes, by the way, has been taking a leaf out of President Kruger's book in the matter of piety. He still prefers to do his "worship" on horseback in the country, but he has subscribed pretty liberally to religious movements, including the Salvation Army and the Wesleyan Church. Yes, he is a very 'cute gentleman, and knows how to "burn a candle to the Devil."

Dr. Parker says there are worse things than war. That's because his cloth, to say nothing of his age, saves him from a share of the fighting. Dr. Parker draws attention, also, to the fact that the Lord is a man of war. Well, we should not at all mind if the Christian deity went to the front in South Africa; and we shouldn't wear mourning if he went down before a Boer or British bullet. The world could do remarkably well without that deity.

Archdeacon Emery let the cat out of the bag at the Church Congress over the subject of "Sunday Employments." He referred to Sunday concerts as "the most daring competition with churches and chapels." Precisely so. That is how we have always described them. It is "competition" that the Church dreads on Sunday, and the Lord's Day simply means the Parson's Day.

Sir Edward Clarke told the Church Congress that "a large part of the intellect of the country had been alienated from their creed, and a large number of the toilers never entered their buildings." He said that they had heard enough about

the Catholic Revival. What was really wanted was a Christian Revival. He forgets, however, that the High Church party regard "Catholic" and "Christian" as synonymous.

The *Daily News* was really witty over the High Church party's attitude at the Church Congress. "The Church," it said, "is now engaged in throwing over the Suzerainty." Lord Halifax is the Kruger of the situation, and Dr. Creighton is the President Steyn."

Christian hatred of the Jews dies hard. Rabbi Guedemann, of Vienna, finds it still necessary to combat the idea that the Jews are in the habit of killing a Christian every year and using the victim's blood in their ritual. This ridiculous fable seems to be devoutly believed even now by millions of Catholics in Austria.

The *Christian* is celebrating its fortieth birthday. Having been patiently endured so long, it might, at any rate, signalise its arrival at the years of discretion by speaking the truth. Yet it talks in its latest issue of the "utter collapse of the Bradlaugh party in this country," meaning thereby the party of militant Freethinkers.

What nonsense! The Freethought party was never so much alive, even in Charles Bradlaugh's days, as it is at the present time. It has brighter prospects, more tangible aims, more cohesive power, more collateral support, and a stronger determination than ever existed, even in the days of that giant of Freethought whose memory is still green.

Reference is made by this Christian print to the change of occupation in the Old-street meeting place, just as if Freethinkers had no other place of meeting in London. Changes necessarily take place in the course of time. But, so far, there is no record of a Freethought assembly hall being engulfed by earthquake, swallowed in sand, struck by lightning, demolished by fire, immersed by water—all of which fates have attended Temples of God. And no one knows what is in the future for these conventicles. The great St. Paul's Cathedral is, according to the *Christian Budget*, actually built on a foundation of quicksand, and the fabric may be expected in the course of time to subside.

Since Bradlaugh's death, says the *Christian*, nothing has been heard of Freethought in this country. "Bradlaugh and Ingersoll were orators of the first order, and they sacrificed a great deal for their cause. With all their rhetoric and their striking personalities, their teaching was stillborn. They were mere voices without a message, and so while the Gospel they attacked remains unshaken, and goes on its way, their attempt to discredit it will soon be forgotten" (1 Cor. iii. 12, 13).

The text is supposed to settle it. But, on reference, the Scriptural passage will be found to be simply some of Paul's wild talk about Jesus Christ being the foundation, and "if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest." This seems to apply not to Freethinkers, but to the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury, who are great on the gold. If there is any question as to the hay and stubble—well, that is the natural food of their followers.

But, of course, the text has nothing to do with the matter. Ingersoll and Bradlaugh, who were infinitely greater than Paul, had a distinct message, and the Gospel they attacked, so far from being unshaken, is at the present moment tottering to its fall.

Holy Communion is absurd enough in itself, but the following instruction to child-candidates takes the cake. A Church of England devotional manual solemnly warns the juvenile "to wash its mouth overnight, lest, if this were done in the morning, a drop of water might be accidentally swallowed. If you swallow even a drop of water, that is breaking your fast. To make your Communion after breaking your fast dishonors Jesus. It is a sin against the Holy Ghost; if done wilfully and against light, it is a mortal sin. What price this? Could folly go further? Fancy teaching little kiddies such abominable tommy-rot. The pious ass who wrote it deserves to be kicked.

Read in the light of subsequent events, the account of the meeting of the National Free Church Council in the Farringdon Street Memorial Hall, at which the Christian people assembled prayed "for the preservation of peace with quiet earnestness and intensity," looks rather like a piece of solemn irony.

The *Expository Times*, writing on the judgment to come, says: "The workers of iniquity must be told that 'jelly good fellows' cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven." This says the *Church Gazette*, amounts to giving points to the devil.

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Echo, "is that the Church of England was never less in real contact with the toiling masses of the people than at the present time, and the intellectual average of the clergy has seldom been lower."

Where is God? What on earth is he doing? Here is the Bishop of Sierra Leone pointing to North Africa, and solemnly asserting that there are 50,000,000 of people between the Atlantic and the Red Sea, and not a single Christian missionary. What nonsense to talk of a divine revelation to mankind that misses multitudes like these.

Apropos of the recent Church Congress, the *Church Review* offered some hints to clerical visitors to London. It mentioned as available relaxations certain dramatic performances, including "*The Degenerates*, a somewhat risky play at the Haymarket." It rather discountenanced the *Belle of New York*, but said that the Palace might be patronised. At the Alhambra and Empire "good music and superbly mounted ballets could always be seen." It thoughtfully added, in regard to the music halls: "It is well to remember that smoking is allowed." The *Echo* observes that this is the modern version of fighting the wild beasts at Ephesus.

There is, after all, nothing so remarkable about these recommendations. The *Church Gazette*, with the timidity of a cat dipping its paws in water, gives every week a column notice of "The Drama," the chief feature of which is the endeavor of the writer not to exhibit too great a familiarity with the stage. The effort is always painful—and often successful.

The Dean of Hereford said at one of the Congress meetings that he would not mind seeing working men and boys playing a game of cricket on Sunday. The statement was followed by "Hear, hear." He hastened, however, to say that he could not see the slightest excuse for the amusements which were now being resorted to on Sundays by the upper classes. This is rough on the "upper classes," but they won't mind. The probability is that some of them would rather take exception to the liberty that he accords to the "working men and boys."

A clerical stipend of £900 a year; a parish population of about 100; and an average attendance at church of less than twenty. This is what the late Rev. William Windle, rector of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, E.C., has left behind him. This is what the Lord Chancellor has now at his disposal. He won't have the whole of "Crockford" down upon him. There are so many who already are equally well-fixed.

A society has been started amongst the pious Catholics of Turin for the distribution of wonder-working medallions. As usual, it is a money-making business. The idea was started with a view to obtain funds for the building and endowment of various institutions in memory of a citizen of Turin, one Don Bosco.

We hear of a contribution of ten francs saving a man from mortal sickness; of a person with an incurable sore in the neck being cured at a cost of five francs; and of other marvels. This exploitation of the faith of simple folks in the interests of the Church is the old story. There is no end to the credulity of ignorance, and to the ingenuity which preys upon it, in the name of "religion."

The *Spectator*, commenting on the opening sermon of the Church Congress preached by the Archbishop of Canterbury at St. Paul's, says it "was a forcible plea for unity—that binding power the lack of which has hitherto falsified the desire of our Lord and his Apostles." Does this mean that the Almighty has been baulked in his wishes—that circumstances have been too strong for him? If not, what does it mean?

A man of God, preaching in a Surrey Congregational chapel, said that a friend of his had had £10,000 in South African mines, and had been obliged to sell his £12 shares for 15s. 6d. each, at which price they were purchased by Mr. Chamberlain. The right hon. gentleman, having his attention drawn to the statements, says he "can hardly believe that a minister of religion would have uttered such deliberate and audacious falsehoods." If he had but a little wider acquaintance with the men of God, the right hon. gentleman would not be astonished at anything proceeding from such a source.

The Rev. William Earle has been summoned for neglecting to comply with a sanitary notice in respect of certain premises belonging to him in Alfred-place, Whiston-street, Haggerston. The premises consist of a tenement house of some six rooms, inhabited by four families comprising thirty-six children. There was no usable W.C.; the place was choked, and night-soil was flowing over the recess and yard. A nice sort of a landlord this Rev. William Earle.

We can be sure that his own dwelling-place and surroundings are a trifle better than his horrible hole for which he draws rent.

Mr. George Alexander, of the St. James's Theatre, London, laid the memorial stone of a theatre at Perth the other day. The ceremony was prefaced by prayer! Why not have had a few hymns, in which all the Misses Dolly Longsox of the company might have demurely joined? It was a great omission, too, not to bury a copy of the *Rock* or the *Church Times* beneath the memorial stone.

We are getting along very comfortably, says the *Weekly Dispatch*, with the titles of our plays. We have had *The Sign of the Cross* and *The Christian*, a determined onslaught has been made on the Lord's Prayer in a manner which threatened a speedy exhaustion of its phraseology, and quite recently we have seen a requisition on the Decalogue. Mr. H. V. Esmond has now produced a four-act comedy called *The Trinity*, and the other night a performance was given of *The Sacrament of Judas*. There is also on tour *The Devil's Disciple*.

The Rector of Kettlefaston seems to be a broad-minded, charitable soul. He has raised a very edifying dispute about the burial in the parish churchyard of a member of the Nonconformist faith. In a letter to the Rev. Theodore Beckett, a Baptist minister, who had been asked to officiate, he says: "As the authorized pastor of our Lord, and entrusted with the charge of his sheep and guardian of God's acre, I solemnly protest against your intrusion under the authority of an iniquitous Act of Parliament."

He thinks no "small pertaters" of himself—does this Rector of Kettlebaston, a parish, by the way, with a population of 115. At the same time, he is careful to distinguish that "Schism is a sin against God, not against me." He admits that the deceased was a Dissenter who was true to her principles. But he exclaims, "Poor soul! She, thank God, knows better now."

That is a pure conjecture of the Rector, and one not in the very best of taste. Some one has marked the general displeasure of the locality by exploding a bottle of tincture of assafoetida in his church.

A Wakefield Scripture reader named Bloomfield has committed suicide. Archdeacon Downe announced the fact at the close of his sermon in Wakefield Cathedral. At any rate, the "gloomy teachings of infidelity" are not responsible for this occurrence.

"General" Booth's keenness in business was exemplified the other day in a striking case. It was in the most literal sense a case of that description, for it turned on a claim for damages made by a woman who had been injured by a falling sign-board of the Salvation Army. The board struck her on the head, and, according to her showing, she was laid up for eight weeks. For this she demanded the modest sum of £3 19s. The General left his case in the hands of the Court, on the ground that he was the trustee of money given to him for certain purposes, and that the claim seemed excessive for a "trivial injury." The judge, on the contrary, held that it was "a moderate and reasonable one," and allowed it in full with costs. It is strange that the purposes for which money is entrusted to the "General" do not include the succor of such a case of distress. Even if this woman had not suffered by his technical negligence, she might fairly have been the object of his Christian bounty. It would be interesting to know how many of his pecuniary supporters would hold that, in this instance, he had exercised a wise stewardship in closing his fist so tightly on this "trivial" sum. Apart from that, he might easily have escaped all qualms of conscience by paying the money out of his own pocket.—*Daily News*.

While Sir Edward Clarke, a staunch Churchman, declares that never was the Church so near to disestablishment and disendowment as at the present time, the *Church Weekly* says that never were the foes of the Church so much impressed with its vitality. While various journals have been writing of the success of the Church Congress, the *Record*, an old-established Church journal, discounts the event in a most remarkable, but perfectly justifiable, way.

"It would be a mistake," observes the *Record*, "to say that the Congress has, in any way, laid hold of London. Such a thing is beyond these gatherings. London is too big; its distances too vast; its interests too varied; its craving for now sensations too exacting. Moreover, circumstances were against it. The Boer ultimatum was announced whilst the Congress was holding its first session, and the minds even of those most interested in the Congress were naturally attracted to larger and sterner issues."

This last observation shows that the *Record* has some sense of proportion. Of course, the issues in the ultimatum were

"larger and sterner" than those involved in squabbles over ritual or other points of ecclesiastical polity which the Congress discussed.

The *Record* notes that the Congress "was but briefly reported in the papers, possibly owing to war news, and in part perhaps to the unwise treatment of press representatives." The meaning of the latter remark is that the clerical officials, with their usual obtuseness and want of tact, became so aggressively self-important that the representatives of the leading morning papers—who, as a rule, have a strong personal contempt for Church Congresses—gave as little of the proceedings as they could—and that was a great deal more than most of the public had the patience to read.

As a result of Father Ignatius's parting shot on leaving the Church, people are inquiring where and in what form can they find the "really awful blasphemies of Dean Fremantle and his followers who are successfully bringing all religion into contempt."

A serious split has occurred amongst the Episcopalians of New York in consequence of Bishop Potter persisting in ordaining Dr. Briggs, the famous advocate of the "higher criticism" of the Bible.

Critics of Dickens, says the *Westminster Budget*, have carped at the "moral pocket-handkerchiefs" immortalised in *Pickwick*. "What is a 'moral pocket-handkercher'?" asked Sam Weller, when told that his coach-driving parent would not subscribe to provide them for the native negroes. "Those which combine amusement with instruction," replied Mr. Stiggins.

It would seem as if Dickens were justified by their continued existence, for, in a missionary appeal which is being circulated this very month, it is noted that "anyone wanting handkerchiefs for African children is requested to apply for some of those specially printed for this mission." These may not, of course, blend select tales with woodcuts, but if they did they would not be the first of their kind. There is no reason, however, why the juvenile blacks should not wipe their little flat noses on pictures of Noah's Ark, the Serpent in the Garden of Eden, and other instructive Scriptural stories. It is not an unfitting fate for such fables.

Missionary—"Surely you remember Mr. Twaddles, who preached to your tribe ten years ago?" Savage Chief—"Oh, yes; I remember him well—he was delicious!"

The Tradesmen's Association of St. Anne's, Blackpool, recently communicated with the District Council on the subject of the Sunday sale of newspapers. This was reported to the annual meeting of the Association the other day. Whereupon one of the members, Mr. John Allen, who seems to be gifted with a great deal more sense than his colleagues, inquired whether, at the same time, a similar communication had been made to the churches and chapels. They were, as far as he could observe, by far the greatest sinners in the sale of papers and books on Sundays.

Clerical wit is indeed a fearful and wonderful thing. A rector of one of the city parishes of London advertised last week for a clergyman to assist him in Sunday services. A part of the advertisement is—"Views: Broad, High Church, Evangelical, Catholic." This, of course, is mere nonsense; but it is a fair sample of parsonic humor, when the man of God is moved to be jocular or caustic.

The *New York Truthseeker* for October 7 prints a whole column of recent delinquencies of men of God in the United States. Of course this proves nothing against Christianity, except that it does not make its devotees conspicuously better than its opponents.

Mr. Moody, the American revivalist, at one of the meetings in Northfield, Massachusetts, had his sick grandchild specially prayed for. This incident is dealt with by a *Tribune* writer in the following fashion: "Now, what sort of a theory of God does the whole proceeding imply? We are told that he is as infinitely loving as he is all-wise and omnipotent, more ready to do favors to his children than they can ask or think. He must know all about Mr. Moody and his deserts, and that his grandchild is ill, to his great distress and sorrow; and yet, with power to cure her instantly, he waits to be importuned to do so, with, let us say, some little doubt still as to whether he will or not. Would a loving earthly father behave in that way were he similarly circumstanced? One can understand such a god who, under the theories held by Mr. Moody and his followers, governs the world by special providential interpositions, and is directly responsible for everything that happens in it, devastating in sudden wrath and fury the fair island of Porto Rico the other day, wrecking its towns and villages, killing and maiming thousands of its inhabitants, and leaving tens of thousands more to starve unless relieved by the more fortunate brethren elsewhere. The god who interposes to save the sick when importuned to do so, and

who may be constantly and successfully called on to set aside the laws of the universe, must by necessity be the same one who lets loose the ruthless savagery of the hurricane, and who has for ages scattered ceaseless evil and misery among our suffering and helpless race. People seldom stop to realise that the god who saves one man from shipwreck in answer to prayer purposely drowns all the rest."

George Emer, of Jersey City, got up in the night and told his wife to get ready to meet God, as he was about to kill her and himself. This was awkward for the poor woman, but she got out of the difficulty. Before doing the fatal deed the pious murderer knelt down to pray, and while he was conversing with God his wife quietly slipped out and had a little conversation with a policeman, with the result that Heaven missed two immigrants.

Dr. Alexander, Primate of the Protestant Church of Ireland, referring to the chairman's bell at the Irish Church Congress, said he felt inclined to exclaim, "Hang that bell." When the laughter and cheers subsided, he innocently inquired, "Is not a bell intended for hanging?" Why yes. But it makes at least as much noise in that position. His lordship really felt like swearing, and he might as well have said: "Damn that bell." Certainly a clergyman has more to do with damning than hanging.

"May the Lord forgive me for what I am about to do," wrote Charles Childs, of Highgate, before cutting his throat. He was not in a forgiving mood himself, though, for he asked the Lord to "curse" his sister and his sweetheart. There is never much altruism in religion when you get to the bottom of it.

The Bishop of London is taken to task by the *Daily News* for saying that "The more sulky the man, the more cheerful the wife must be." "There is nothing so irritating," our contemporary says, "to any human being as to have another smile and smile and smile again at all his efforts to lose his temper. It is no paradox to say that the concession of a little ill-temper in return would really prove a better peace-maker." The journalist understands human nature better than the Bishop.

Mrs. W. Bridie, a lady missionary, and a wife of the Wesleyan minister, has been speaking at Leeds. Describing her work in the Canton district of China, she said that the great difficulty to contend with was woman's tongue. She had found that nearly every evil in China was traceable more or less to woman's tongue, which could not be easily silenced. No doubt there is some truth in this, but the lady need not have gone all the way to China to discover it.

The Chevalier Von Bunsen, long the Prussian Ambassador at the Court of London, told a story of Home, the spiritualist, and Napoleon III. The famous "meijum" told the Emperor that a certain spirit wanted to speak directly with him. After some palaver the Emperor consented to give the ghostly gentleman an interview. Directly it began the spirit knocked Louis Napoleon behind—and kept up the performance the whole length of the room. When the Emperor pulled himself together, he sternly asked Home the meaning of this performance. "Sire," replied Home, "that was Louis Philippe."

When the *Daily News* forgets its Nonconformist faith—which it often does when it gets a good chance—it speaks out boldly enough in religious matters. Referring to the history of the Dreyfus case the other day, it made the following frank admission: "The sagacity and foresight of Gambetta have been conclusively verified. Priestcraft is the enemy, and if it be not crushed, it will itself crush the soundest elements in social life. The brave and honest men who fought for Captain Dreyfus, as Voltaire fought for Calas, because he was innocent, and because his conviction, if unchallenged, would have destroyed justice in the army, were almost without exception Protestants or Freethinkers."

Rev. Edgar Solly Anthony, of Almondbury, Poole, writes to the press complaining that it is impossible for a Nonconformist to become a headmaster, or even an assistant master, of a public school. Well, it is impossible for a Freethinker to become a headmaster, or even an assistant master, of a Board school. Yet the Nonconformists regard this as a perfectly just arrangement.

An American Christian paper says that the only damning sin is unbelief. Probably that is why the editor is not an unbeliever. He's afraid of hell, and wants heaven on easy terms.

Nothing originates and nothing perishes, and the secret of nature lies in an eternal self-sustained circle, wherein cause and effect, are united without beginning and without end.—*Buchner*.

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 22, Athenæum Hall, London, W.; 7.30, "A Freethinker's View of the White War in South Africa."
 October 29, Athenæum Hall.
 November 5, Athenæum Hall; 12, Birmingham; 26, Camberwell.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 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.

H. WATERS.—Received and shall have attention.
A. B. MOSS.—We hope your local duties will not prevent your attending the Annual Meeting of the Secular Society, Limited, on November 15.

J. HEYS.—What do you mean by "the speech on the Affirmation Bill which opened the door of parliament to Bradlaugh"? Certainly the speech of Mr. Gladstone had no such effect, for the Bill was defeated, and Bradlaugh only entered parliament when a masterful Speaker (now Lord Peel) stood between him and his pursuers. You don't seem posted up in the facts of the case. Practically speaking, Gladstone did very little for Bradlaugh. He made a fine speech—though Ingersoll could have made a finer one—and then said to his own party, "Do as you please."

E. ELLIOTT.—Not at all bad, but rather too mixed for adequate effect.

W. H. MORRISH.—Pleased to hear that you will take Shares in the new Company. The good wishes of a veteran like yourself are valued as well as your support. We note your remark that if we succeed in making Secularism pay we shall do more to advance the cause than in furnishing potent arguments. We shall try to make it pay, anyhow; and we have a good hope that we shall succeed. Of course success will be all the easier if the whole party rallies promptly around the standard of our enterprise.

T. WILNOT.—The date is booked for Camberwell. With regard to the other matter, seeing Miss Vance is not the same thing as communicating with the editor of the *Freethinker*. When you want anything noticed in these columns you should write to us direct. Moreover, it is against our practice to write paragraphs on hearsay, perhaps at third or fourth hand. We prefer to have something before us in black on white. We are glad to learn that the Branch held its own against the bigots in Brockwell Park last Sunday, and note that Mr. Pack lectures again there to-day (Oct. 22).

LOUIS LEVINE.—Much obliged for your many kind attentions.

J. P. BALL.—Thanks for your welcome weekly batch of cuttings—doing a noble work in Victoria Park. We wish our party had a thousand James Neates.

T. P. STEWART.—Transmitted to Miss Vance, who will write you. Thanks. Every share counts, and those who can only take two now may take more hereafter.

G. DAWSON BAKER.—Your letters are bound to do good. We regard such correspondence as a most effective form of propaganda.

J. KEAST (Bristol).—Thanks for your tragi-comical report of the Rev. Mr. Logan's peace-meeting. A row in a chapel has its diverting aspects. Perhaps the reverend gentleman understands now how skin-deep are some of the "great Christian virtues" he has so often vaunted.

E. WEBB.—The reference is to Colonel Ingersoll, who threw himself in front of President Garfield after the wretched Guiteau had fired upon him. Sorry we cannot supply you with the other reference. More than one person might well be meant.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Bath Herald—Isle of Man Times—Sydney Bulletin—Grimsby News—Truthseeker (New York)—People's Newspaper—Secular Thought—Lucifer—Ethical World—Torch of Reason—Paul and Joseph, by Howard Swan—Progressive Worlds—Boston Investigator—El Libre Pensamiento—Two Papers—Freidenker—Crescent—Liberator.

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, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Special.

APPLICATIONS for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, are still flowing in. About two-thirds (in point of number) of the friends whose names were printed in the *Freethinker* have already redeemed their promises of support. No doubt we shall hear from the remaining one-third shortly; indeed, we do hear from some of them by every day's post. We have also heard from a good many fresh friends, and we should like to hear from many more as soon as possible. I see it is no sort of use to be in a hurry. People will take time, and their own time. Anyhow, it is better late than never.

I make a special appeal to those who have given no sign yet. Scores, perhaps hundreds, of my readers are quite able to do something, and I beg them to do it. If they were Christians, they might be urged forward by the hope of heaven or the fear of hell. Being what they are, they must act, if they act at all, for the pure love of Freethought. At the same time, there is every prospect of their receiving a reasonable dividend on their investment in this Company. They can aid the Freethought movement without loss to themselves. And everyone who takes Shares becomes a part owner of the literary machinery of our propaganda, which is surely a good democratic way of going to work. Let us give a strong pull—not necessarily, I hope, a long pull—and a pull altogether, and we shall achieve a splendid success.

On the last page of this week's *Freethinker* the Company's Prospectus is printed. Beneath it is a Form of Application for Shares. Those who have lost, or who never had, the separate Prospectus can fill in this form, and cut it off and forward it to the Secretary, with their remittance.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectures this evening (October 22) at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W. His subject will be "A Freethinker's View of the White War in South Africa." Mr. Foote will deal with the matter thoroughly, and not in the spirit of political partisanship. No doubt London Freethinkers will want to hear him.

Mr. Foote had good audiences on Sunday at Manchester, though not quite as good as he sometimes has there, probably in consequence of the wretchedly poor display of the posters by the Bill-posting Company. Much discussion followed the afternoon lecture on "Boers and Britishers." After the evening lecture on Ingersoll, the mountebank Coleman tried to contribute one of his little entertainments, but the lecturer stopped him by saying he would not be a party to playing a farce on such an occasion. The audience agreed with this, and Coleman subsided. During the day the Branch took up its annual collection for the N.S.S. General Fund, and realised a record amount.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured in the Athenæum Hall, upon "The Church Congress Comedy." He pointed out the "sins of omission and of commission" of the principal speakers, and showed that even from a Christian standpoint the proceedings were a combination of comedy and farce. Judging from the frequent and hearty applause of the audience, they shared Mr. Watts's opinion. There was no discussion. Mr. W. J. Davidson occupied the chair.

After a long absence Mr. Watts visits Hull to-day, Sunday, October 22. He lectures three times in St. George's Hall. His subjects are: "Secular View of Existence," "Emancipation of Human Thought," and "Colonel Ingersoll as I Knew Him." Friends from Grimsby and the surrounding districts are expected to rally in strong force.

Mr. Cohen delivers the last lecture in Victoria Park to-day (Oct. 22) at 3.15. We hope there will be a strong rally of the local "saints" on this occasion—the last meeting for the present season. Mr. Heaford's meeting there on Sunday afternoon was a very large one, and was orderly enough until the Christians, irritated at the smallness of their own gathering, came over in a body to disturb the "infidels." One of them, with a silk hat and anything but silk manners, had to be removed from the Park by the police. The others

hooted and yelled to their heart's content. Still, they could not break up the meeting. The Secularists stood their ground all the time.

The Porth Branch meets to-day (October 22) at 6 p.m., at 30 Middle-street, Pontypridd. All members and friends are earnestly invited to attend. It is hoped that arrangements may be made for a public debate between Mr. Cohen and a local minister.

The New York *Truth* for October, a very handsomely got-up periodical, devotes several pages to the late Colonel Ingersoll, varying the letterpress with some fine portraits. The tribute is highly laudatory. "Surrounded in life more than any other man," it says, "with people who held him in loving and tender regard, his name will live as long as sympathy, love, and liberty are found in the human heart." Ingersoll is described as "one of the most magnificent figures of the nineteenth century."

The American Secular Union holds its Annual Congress in Boston on November 17, 18, and 19. Paine Hall has been offered, and accepted, for the meetings. An Ingersoll memorial meeting will occupy one session of the Congress.

Mr. Reichwald, secretary of the American Secular Union, requests us to send a cheering letter to the Boston Congress. He says the American Freethinkers need all the sympathy and stimulus they can get after the loss of Ingersoll. Of course we shall send the letter.

Good letters by G. Dawson Baker and J. W. Wittering have appeared in the *Grimby News* on "Religious Education" in elementary schools. Both letters, of course, advocate purely secular education. We may add that letters of this kind in local newspapers are of great service to the Freethought Movement.

The National Secular Society's Almanack for 1900 is now in course of preparation, and Miss Vance, the N.S.S. Secretary, would be glad to hear from intending advertisers. Branch secretaries should return the forms already sent them as quickly as possible.

Mr. G. Waters reports that he has succeeded in passing a resolution to have the *Freethinker* placed on the library table of the Woolwich Radical Club.

Mr. Arthur B. Moss finished his outdoor season by a capital lecture in the Grove, Stratford, on Sunday last, taking for his subject "The Religion of the Twentieth Century." During the season Mr. Moss has delivered thirty-eight lectures in the open air, besides four in the provinces, and three at various Radical Clubs in London. He has also spoken at five of the Demonstrations in the parks. Surely a very good record for the season.

Our friend, Mr. Morrish, of Bristol, has lately been making a tour in the North of Ireland. We give a short extract from his letter: "From Portrush to the celebrated Giant's Causeway is a charming little ride of eight miles by electric tramway. The Causeway itself is a marvellous freak of nature. About half a mile from it is a peculiar dark cave of considerable extent, and at low water there is a singular phosphorescent gleam imparted from the sea, so that a weird, uncanny appearance pervades everything. Near the approach to the cave 'a religious man' has taken up his abode. He has lived there for years, dressed only in an old sack, with stones for his bed, and a few stones piled up in front of him. It must be awfully cold in winter time. He has an idea that his hard life and self-denial is pleasing to the Lord! Various kindly-disposed people occasionally bring him food, etc. He never washes himself; but the saints were never remarkable for personal cleanliness. For myself, I think he would be more usefully employed in mending some of the public roads."

Proselytising Benevolence.

THOUGH a great deal is made by Christian evidence exponents of the charitable works of Christian believers, much of the credit that is claimed will be found, on examination, to be hardly allowable by unbiassed observers. In the first place, the real and undisguisable motives actuating many of these works are open to serious question; and, in the next place, the results achieved are not always, nor even frequently, such as could be desired. Proverbially, a gift-horse is not to be looked at in the mouth; but should it be presented as a bribe, both the generosity of the donor and the honesty of the recipient are fair subjects of criticism, apart from an examination of the animal's teeth.

It is not too much to say that many of the good works and charitable sacrifices for which Christians

take credit are inspired by the promise of a hundred fold return hereafter. Equally indisputable is the fact that a great deal of Christian benevolence is designed and employed mainly as a proselytising agent. These good works are performed, not simply because they are good in themselves or beneficial to those for whom they are ostensibly undertaken, but because they are a prudent investment, which will be productive of immense and quite disproportionate profit—not here and now, where that can hardly be expected—but in some future existence, where all things are possible. Further, they are regarded as a means of drawing into the fold—those inducements are unworthy—people who would otherwise remain outside; and, in so far as success is attained in the way of accessions, that, too, is expected to count for righteousness. Such works, then, being in many a spring and motive mercenary, what more natural than that dishonesty and hypocrisy should figure in their results?

Let us look at the Christian agencies of an eleemosynary character that are now at work. In nearly all, the action of the two principles indicated will be readily perceived. The service rendered is not to Humanity but to Divinity. It is an offering of faith, and not the spontaneous outcome of human sympathy. Suffering and want are relieved from ulterior considerations, which the classes or individuals to whom help is accorded play but a secondary part. The poor are made the stepping-stones whereon the pious possessors of wealth hope to mount to heaven. Not that the affluent pietists are strong enough in their belief to "sell all and give to the poor." They hope to attain to eternal bliss by easier methods. They are prepared to dole out portions of their wealth, usually in such a way as to limit the application to objects supposed to be most agreeable to heaven. The bulk, therefore, finds its way to organizations which more or less specifically aim at the spread of religious belief, the conversion of the heathen at home and abroad. Purely secular institutions, if they do not in fact come badly off, fail to win the recognition they deserve. Some institutions supposed to be secular—such as voluntary hospitals, asylums, and infirmaries—are often permitted to become the hunting grounds of salaried clerics and other zealots, and, frequently, they receive support because they are known to be spheres of Christian conversion.

Funds left unreservedly for the benefit of the poor have been diverted from their original object to purely ecclesiastical purposes. The records of the Charity Commissioners disclose shameful instances of this kind of clerical appropriation. Where the dispensing of doles to the "deserving poor" has been left in the hands of the clergy, it is needless to ask who are selected as the recipients. Of course, the "deserving poor" are found to be attendants at church, and the doles are turned into bait to fill the empty pews. The visiting and nursing of the sick at their homes is a charitable work which in itself is worthy of commendation. But of the Christian workers who undertake it, how many can be said to be actuated solely by a desire to relieve the suffering and penury they encounter? Their main object is to secure an assent to their particular religious creed, to impress upon the recipients of their attention and bounty the doctrines of the Christian faith. Many pious, well-meaning young women devote their lives to nursing the sick, hoping, of course, to assist in their recovery, but hoping still more to secure Divine approbation by bringing the patients to Jesus. The patients may die, but the main thing aimed at has been accomplished if they but "die in the Lord." The home missions to various sections of the community established and supported by Christian benefactors include in their operations secular work of an undoubtedly salutary and helpful character. That, however, is not the chief object of their existence. Suggest to the workers that they should leave their Bibles and hymn-books at home when they sally forth, and it will be immediately seen what it is that they regard as of vital importance. When, therefore, their principal aim is to evangelise—to make their own "calling and election sure," and to bring people to an acceptance of certain religious tenets—about which, by the way, they are not at all agreed among themselves—they must not be surprised if their efforts, in what to them are minor matters, do not command unstinted approval. They

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have their reward in the conversions and the spiritual awakenings which they expect to be placed to their credit in the celestial ledger.

The pious benefactions to the poor are rightly regarded as "gifts to God." They mostly find their way into the hands of God's representatives, by whom they are devoted to God's service, which generally means directing the poor to "kingdom come," rather than ameliorating their lot in the present life. What is done in the latter direction is miserably incommensurate with the means that would be available but for the remarkable shrinkage that seems to occur. The distribution usually proceeds on the lines of a ha'porth of bread to an intolerable deal of Gospel. And the struggle for the ha'porth of bread means a sacrifice of independence, sometimes of honesty and sincerity, which in the guise of "poor parishioners brought to grace" may figure very well in the parish magazine or the minister's monthly letter, but is distinctly lamentable from any other point of view.

It is not necessary to read Mr. Arthur Morrison's incidental descriptions in *A Child of the Jago* to understand how in the East-end the parish alms find their way into the hands of undeserving objects. The principal qualification is "knowing the ropes," or, in other words, the times to put in an appearance at church, and the forms of speech best calculated to carry weight with the clerical almoners. Effusive professions of piety couched in phrases learnt from Scripture-readers are found to be effective, if accompanied with sighs and tears intended to denote repentance for past sins. And in provincial towns and rural parishes pretty much the same kind of successful deception prevails. A premium is offered to hypocrisy and religious fraud. The few sharp-eyed, keen-witted clerics who refuse to be duped are isolated examples in an army of parsons always eager to feed and clothe applicants who come with a text in their mouths and a confession of their transgressions, chief among which they are careful to rank the heinous offence of failure to attend regularly to the public worship of God. So few of the decent members of the humbler classes care to voluntarily enter a church that it is hardly to be wondered that the parsonic mind—usually of a most gullible type—becomes elated by the capture of these birds of prey. With devout thanks to God, they are counted as converts to Christ, lost sheep of the house of Israel who have been providentially reclaimed.

What the Lord himself is likely to think of them, or what kind of estimate would probably be formed by those whose funds have been employed in their reclamation, are matters that must be left to the conjecture of the faithful. Common-sense people will be inclined to think that such conversions are dear at any price. Anyhow, they carry with them but little credit. As to the tickets for coals, soup, groceries, boots, blankets, etc., by which these conversions and reclamations are effected—well, such potent aids to belief may be pointed to as examples of Christian care for the poor, but it is a kind of care calculated to do nearly as much harm as good. Bought believers are bad bargains at best. Christian benevolence has provided a plentiful supply for the Christian Church. The latter may be proud of its acquisitions, and rejoice over them and be exceeding glad. But outsiders may be excused if they decline to regard the benevolence as altogether disinterested, or its results as entirely satisfactory; or either as being evidence of the beneficent influence of the Christian faith.

FRANCIS NEALE.

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. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window

Death and Resurrection.*

LESSING proved, in his ingenious booklet, *How the Ancients Represented Death*, that the Greek artists did not represent death as a skeleton, but as the brother of sleep, the picture being that of a genius with an inverted torch. In the meantime skeletons have been discovered among the relics of ancient art; but Lessing's contention has for that reason not been refuted. On the contrary, it found thereby further corroboration, for the skeleton is not intended to represent death.

It is well known that in Egypt the figure of a mummy was passed around on festive occasions, with the words, "Eat and drink and be merry, for soon you will be like this." The mummy represented to them the transiency of life, and, far from inciting the revelers to ponder over the problem of death, it was interpreted in the sense of Omar Khayyam as a lesson to enjoy life, and to drain the cup of pleasure to the lees.

The skeleton among the Greeks had the same significance as the Egyptian mummy at carousals. Far from making men serious, it was intended to dispel all gloomy thoughts. This interpretation appears most plainly in the silver cup found at Boscoreale among other silver-ware, the pieces of which show a simple and pure taste, but may belong to a later age of classical antiquity.

The skeletons represented on this cup are not geni of death, but represent certain sages and poets who have now passed away, and whose present condition would admonish the merry revelers to pluck the rose while it is in bloom, and to enjoy life while it lasts. It is a classical analogue to the Christian Death Dances; in fact, it is a death-dance; but how different is the tendency in the two cases!

There can be no doubt concerning the interpretation of the figures, since the names are inscribed over the skeletons, who represent the philosophers Epicurus and Zeno, and the poets Anacreon, Sophocles, Moschus, Euripides, and Menander.

Very strange performances are the death-dances of the Tibetan mystery-plays, one of which is performed on the last three days of the year, and is called "the ceremony of the sacrificial body of the dead year." The effigy of a man made out of dough as life-like as possible, and having inside a distinct heart and all the entrails filled with a red fluid, is placed by four cemetery ghouls in sight of the numerous spectators in the centre of the yard, and at once bands of skeleton-ghosts rush upon the corpse to attack it. This is the time to display the necromantic power of Lamaism over the evil spirits. Monks and lamas come forth and go through a series of ceremonies, the magic effect of which keeps the fiends away. But a more formidable devil with great horns, and possessed of superior powers, makes his appearance and takes the field. Whereupon a saint, or an incarnation of Buddha himself, comes to the rescue, sprays flour on the enemy, makes mystic signs, and utters incantations. The skeleton-ghosts and the big fiend grovel before him and implore mercy. He graciously yields to their supplications, and allows them to partake of a sacramental meal. While they kneel before him he gives to each one of them a little flour to eat and a drink out of a vessel of holy water.

This concludes the day's performance.

The corpse, however, is not destined to be preserved. On the next day the fight is renewed, and, after a cannonade with blessed mustard-seed and other exorcisms, an awful demon appears whose title is "the holy king of religion." He wears the head of a bull, a dagger in the right, and the effigy of a human heart in the left, hand. This strange figure seems to represent the main deity of the ancient Tibetans, when they were still in the habit of offering human sacrifices, not in effigy, but in reality. The demon god has been converted by Buddha and become a protector of Buddhism. He is now satisfied with human sacrifices in effigy, and the man made of dough, being supposed to be an enemy of Tibet, is surrendered to him. He dances round the figure of the man on the ground, stabs him, binds his feet in a snare, and at last cuts off his limbs, slits open his breast, takes

* This article is in the nature of a supplement to the series of articles on "Death in Religious Art" which appeared in the *Open Court*, Vol. XI., No. 12, and Vol. XII., Nos. 1 and 2.

out his bleeding heart, lungs, and other intestines. At this moment a horde of monsters falls upon the remnants of the dismembered dough-man and scatters them in all directions. The pieces are collected again in a silver basin, and the Holy King of Religion, eating a morsel, throws them up in the air. This is the signal for the *finale*; the pieces are caught and fought for by the demons, and at last the crowd of spectators joins the general scramble for pieces of dough, representing human flesh, which they either eat or treasure up as talismans.

Similar ceremonies are executed by different sects in different ways, but all of them indicate survivals of practices which antedate the institutions of Buddhism.

Another interesting relic of skeleton-representation is preserved by Gori* in a crude inscription which no longer belongs to classical antiquity, but dates from the first Christian centuries. It is scratched on a magnet-stone, and represents Death as a skeleton, according to some such conception as is represented in the Gospel of Nicodemus, where Death, in communion with Satan, is said to have power over the world, as the great monarch to whom everything that lives is subject. The picture shows Death riding on a chariot drawn by lions; at least, this is the interpretation which Bishop Münter† gives of the strangely-shaped and ill-drawn animals, which gallop over another skeleton while a third skeleton to the right contemplates the scene.

The illustration is accompanied by unintelligible inscriptions, similar in character to the Ephesian letters so frequently found on Abraxas gems. The probability is that this strange device, which unequivocally belongs to the period of Gnostic thought, was used as an emblem by some secret religious society, and represented an idea that was communicated to the members in "mysteries." The absence of any Christian emblem would lead us to conclude that it is pagan-Gnostic.

Death, as a rule, is not represented in the Christian catacombs, except, perhaps, by palms and wreaths, or allegories of rest. Boldetti‡ found in the cemetery of Calixtus and Praetextatus a crudely-wrought slab representing a wagon, the tongue of which is carved in the shape of a cross, and is turned backward, as a sign of its no longer being used. The driver and horses are not seen, but the whip appears by the side of the wagon. The inscription is mutilated beyond recognition, but the name of the man buried, Agilius, is legible.

While death itself is not represented by the early Christians, the thought of death was not foreign to them; and the main thing on which their interest is concentrated is the hope of resurrection.

The idea of immortality among the early Christians was not a preservation of the soul, but a resurrection of the body; and this is one reason why they preferred burial to cremation. Prudentius says (*Cathemerinon Hymn*):—

"There will soon come a time when genial warmth shall revisit these bones, and the soul will resume its former tabernacle, animated with living blood. The inert corpses, long since corrupted in the tomb, shall be borne through the ether [auras] in company with the souls. For this reason is such care bestowed upon the sepulchre; such honor paid to the motionless limbs; such luxury displayed in funerals. We spread the linen cloth of spotless white—myrrh and frankincense embalm the body. What do these excavated rocks signify? What these fair monuments? What, but that the object entrusted to them is sleeping, and not dead..... But now death itself is blessed, since through its pangs a path is thrown open to the just, a way from sorrow to the stars.....We will adorn the hidden bones with violets and many a bough; and on the epitaph and the cold stones we will sprinkle liquid odors" (*The Church in the Catacombs*, by C. Maitland, pp. 45, 46).

The immortality of the soul, such as it was taught by Plato, whose Socrates scorned to identify himself with the corpse that would form his bodily remains, would not have satisfied these simple-minded people, and so the doctrine was officially adopted by the Church and incorporated into the Apostolic Confession of Faith, where it reads: "I believe.....in a resurrection of the flesh." The fear of death, therefore, is repelled by the thought of resurrection, which is interpreted literally

* *Gemma Astrifera*, ii., p. 248.

† *Sinnbilder und Kunstvorstellungen*, p. 110.

‡ *Ossersazioni*, p. 349.

and in a materialistic sense, and thus we find a great number of bas reliefs and pictures directly or indirectly representing the idea of a reawakening to life.

The Christians of later centuries clung tenaciously to the belief in resurrection from the grave, the reanimation of the dust, the revival of the body, or howsoever the doctrine was expressed; only of late this crude and materialistic conception begins to give way to a more spiritual belief in the immortality of the soul. The most favorite German funeral-hymn begins with the words* :—

Auferstehn, ja auferstehn
Sollst du mein Staub nach kurzer Ruh.

The hymns of the English-speaking world give expression to the same hope. American Christians sing :—

Thus shall they guard my sleeping dust,
And, as the Savior rose,
The grave again shall yield her trust
And end my deep repose.

Robert Pollok, a Scottish religious poet of great fervor, and a faithful believer in Calvinism,† describes in detail how every atom of the body will be raised on the day of judgment. He says :—

The doors of death were opened, and in the dark
And loathsome vault and silent charnel-house
Moving were heard the mould'ring bones that sought
Their proper place. Instinctive every soul;
Flew to its clayey part; from grass-grown mold
The nameless spirit took its ashes up.....
Wherever slept one grain of human dust—
Essential organ of a human soul.
Wherever tossed—obedient to the call
Of God's omnipotence, it hurried on
To meet its fellow-particles, revived,
Rebuilt, in union indestructible.
No atom of his spoils remained to death.‡

A new and higher conception of life appears when the immortality of the soul is insisted upon without reference to a revival of the dust. Still mythological, but less offensive, are the lines :—

There is no death in heaven;
But when the Christian dies
The angels wait his parted soul
And wait it to the skies.

Theodore Parker boldly cuts himself loose from the traditional belief in the resurrection of the flesh, and objects to the immortality of "risen dust," saying :—

"In the creed of many Churches it is still written, 'I believe in the resurrection of the flesh.' Many doubted this in early times, but the Council of Nice declared all men accursed who dared to doubt it..... This doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh seems to me impossible and absurd..... When the stiffened body goes down into the tomb..... I feel that there is no death for the man. That clod, which yonder dust shall cover, is not his. It is the dust that goes to its place, the man to his. It is that that I feel my immortality. I look through the grave into heaven. I ask no miracle, no proof, no reasoning into heaven. I ask no risen dust to teach me immortality. I am conscious of eternal life."§

As to the early Christians, we shall easily pardon the crudeness of their conception of immortality when we consider the crudeness of their philosophical knowledge

* This song is probably kept alive through its beautiful lines. It is a sign of the times that one of the verses of *Jesus Christus Zuversicht*, which emphasises bodily resurrection, has recently been dropped from the *Württembergische Gesangbuch*. The verse reads :—

Dann wird eben diese Haut
Mich umgeben wie ich gläube.
Gott wird werden angesehen,
Dann von mir in diesem Leibe
Und in diesem Fleisch werd ich
Jesus sehen ewiglich.

It is obvious that the ideas of the resuscitation of "this skin of ours, these eyes, this body, this flesh," have become objectionable to the ever-increasing intelligent portion of Christianity.

† Robert Pollok was born at Moorhouse, Renfrewshire, Scotland, in 1798, and died at Southampton, September 17, 1827. His chief work was *The Course of Time*, a poem which has passed through many editions, and is still a favorite in serious households in Scotland. The poem treats of the spiritual life and destiny of man. It was published March, 1827, and at once became popular. It is written in blank verse in ten books, in the poetic diction of the eighteenth century, but with abundance of enthusiasm, impassioned elevation of feeling, and copious use of words and images. (See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xii., p. 403.)

‡ Quoted from an unpublished book, *Faiths of Famous Men*, by the Rev. John K. Kilbourn, Philadelphia, Pa.

§ *Ibid.*

and general education. To them religion was still a kind of magic. Thus Jesus is, in the most ancient pictures of Christian art, commonly represented after the fashion of a magician, wand in hand, to indicate his power of working miracles. The belief in miracles simply served in those times, as it does to-day, to feed the yearning for a resurrection of the dead. If miracles are possible, why cannot a corpse be resurrected to life? No doubt, in the bas-reliefs on sarcophagi, where Jesus is represented as multiplying the loaves and fishes, the artist thought of him in the sense in which Christ is regarded in the Fourth Gospel, as being the bread of life. Further, Christ is represented as Orpheus, with the lyre that moved the heart of the pitiless king of death; as Jonah, who was hidden in the interior of the whale; and especially as the master over life and death, which power he proved in the resurrection of Lazarus.

The crudeness of the old conception of immortality need not blind us to the germs of truth which are contained in it. We no longer believe in a reawakening to life of the corpse, but we know that there is a preservation of the soul.

Our life is in our thoughts, our sentiments, and in our endeavors, and they are spiritual, not material. The material particles which do the work while we think are discarded in the process as waste-products, and are replaced by new material of the same kind. Our thoughts are preserved as memory by a preservation of form. The form remains in the metabolism of our physical system, and preserves the continuity of our spiritual life. In the same way as the waste-products of the process of thinking are not our thoughts, the corpses of the dead are the remains of those who have consummated their lives, not the men themselves, not their aspirations, their thoughts, their deeds. The body dies, and is doomed to disintegration; but the significance of a man, his life-work, his soul, the new formation which he has called into being, are not annihilated and a real presence, the bliss of which continues in its individual and personal significance according to the worth of each individual soul.

—The Open Court.

Correspondence.

THE CASE OF MR. ENGSTRÖM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—While I quite agree with you that it was a mistake to hope that any good would be done by appealing to the Christian Evidence Society to conduct its crusade against Freethought with fair play and courtesy, I beg you to allow me space for a few words on the subject of Mr. Engström's letter. I do not address myself to him. He has shown clearly that he has no desire to arrive at the truth of the matter, and indeed he has not much to gain by doing so. At the same time, I am scarcely convinced against the evidence of my own senses, by his merely saying that he doubts many of my statements are false. I could and would prove by several witnesses the truth of every word I wrote, but he, naturally, does not desire that I should do so. Therefore I would end the matter by pointing out that, while the Secretary of the Society uses the same methods of warfare as the subordinates he so anxiously repudiates (only that a better education enables him to use cleaner language), we are justified in coming to the conclusion I suggested in my first letter, that they are driven to this because all better means have failed them.

M. L.

THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—*Propos* the correspondence anent the above, I should like to add a few words. Last April I wrote to the Secretary of this Society protesting against the disgraceful language and incitements to violence used habitually by two of their paid "lecturers" by the names of G. H. Green and Noah Bailey. My charges I offered to substantiate by the evidence of scores of earnest Christian men resident in this locality. On March 1 I received a reply from the Rev. T. T. Waterhouse, in which he says: "Thank you sincerely for your long letter; it shall have our serious and impartial attention." "I need hardly say," he adds, "that such language as you describe we utterly deprecate and condemn." Since receiving this letter I have heard nothing further from the rev. gentleman. Whether inquiry has been made I know not; if it has, it has been a one-sided affair, for my witnesses have not been selected for. But this I do know, that since sending my

complaint to the Society the language of these two fellows has been, if anything, worse; and I, for my pains in taking up what was really a matter of public concern, have been repeatedly assailed from the platform by these two abuse-mongers with all manner of insults—so much so that, on one occasion, I was told by another well-known but respected C. E. advocate of this neighborhood that I would have been perfectly justified in taking the law into my own hands and knocking the speaker (Green) off the platform.

The only moral I can draw from all this is that the C. E. Society, while deeming it best policy to profess repudiation of unfair methods, yet, on the quiet, winks at them. Christian Evidence work, as you, Mr. Editor, once truly said, generally finds a man a blackguard or leaves him so.

Peckham.

WALTER C. HART.

MARTIN LUTHER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—H. J. Traubel, in the *Conservator* quoted by you (October 15), says: "Very few people know anything about Luther." Mr. Traubel seems to know less about him than anybody else, or he could not possibly say of him that he epitomized a cry for liberty, or that he met the devil full-robbed in a priestly council and was not afraid.

As to Luther's championing liberty, the wretched peasantry of Germany, then terribly oppressed, on hearing so much on the reformer's part of "Christian liberty," applied the words not spiritually, but to their outward circumstances, which they hoped would be improved. Poor fellows! they did not know Luther. This is what he meant by liberty: "The ass must have blows, and the people must be governed by force." And again: "There are no more devils in hell; they have all taken possession of the peasants. Wherefore the peasants must secretly and publicly be strangled and killed like mad dogs." He taught that all the petty tyrants of Hesse, Saxony, Wurtemberg, and so on, were appointed by God himself; and such preaching, of course, rendered them favorable to the Reformation. As to Luther not being afraid of the devil, he tells us himself that on one occasion, when he was asked to drive the devil out of a girl possessed, he was so frightened by the said devil, who was obstinate, that he had to rush into the sacristy and change his breeches.

To attempt any comparison between him and Ingersoll is an insult to the latter. Ingersoll never pandered to the passions of any prince, as Luther frequently did. He advocated true and real liberty, which Luther never did; and he was not the miserable slave to superstition which Luther was to the most abject and idiotic degree. He fully believed in the power of witches, and was ready to help to burn them. His arrogance and brutality were boundless. He called other reformers—far superior to him in intellectual and moral qualities, such as Occalampading and Zwingli—devils, because they did not in all points agree with him. Of Sir Thomas More he said: "Verily, he was a very notable tyrant, and plagued and tormented innocent Christians like an executioner"; but Luther did not say this because More was the persecuting bigot he was, but because he was known to have assisted Henry VIII. in his treatise against Luther. To place Luther, the howling dervish of the Bible imposture, the bloodthirsty superstitious enemy of all liberty, mental and political, on the same pedestal as the noble-minded, chivalrous, and intellectually gigantic Ingersoll is, as I said above, an insult to the latter, against which all Freethinkers ought to raise their voices.

C. W. HICKETHORN.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "A Freethinker's View of the White War in South Africa."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, Bohemian Comedy Company in the laughable comedy, "Arabian Nights."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, Annual General Members' Meeting; 7.30, E. Pack, "The God of Battles and the Prince of Peace."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Alfred Milnes, M.A., "Virtue and Merit: A Study of Shaftesbury."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Dr. Stanton Coit, "St. Augustine's Confessions."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, E. Pack; 7, W. J. Ramsey. October 25, at 8, W. J. Ramsey.

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

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

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, F. A. Davies.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, S. Jones.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, Stanley Jones.

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, E. White,

"Historical Value of the New Testament."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner—11, "Sunday"; 7, "Revenge."
 CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, J. M. Robertson, "The Feeling for Religion."

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 7, Mr. Straton, "To be or not to be, *that* is the question."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. M'Clymont; 6.30, A. G. Nostik.

HULL (St. George's Hall): Charles Watts—11, "Secular View of Existence"; 2.30, "Emancipation of Human Thought"; 7, "Colonel Ingersoll as I Knew Him."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, H. P. Ward, "Man's Reason and God's Revelation."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Swan, "The Tyranny of Compulsory Vaccination."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Joseph McCabe—3, "Life in other Planets"; 7, "Materialism and Morals." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): W. Heaford—11, "The Dawn of Christianity"; 3, "A World without God"; 7, "Bible Morality: Its Dangers and Defects." Tea at 5.

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

Lecturers' Engagements.

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

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